commonweal

St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

The Editors
SCUTTLING
THE WORK ETHIC

ONE DOLLAR
JULY 31, 1981

A day in the life of Congress
Nancy Amidei

Remembering Eichmann
JAMES BERNAUER

The Holocaust in books
ROBERT LEITER

Neoconservatives & conservatives
The Dinner Party: an exchange
Powers on abolishing nukes
Garvey on limits to alleg

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Correspondence

Supply-siding . . .

Amarillo, Tex.

To the Editors: You continue to misunderstand the logic of the Reagan tax plan [Editorial: "President Reagan's Dangerous Mixture," June 5]. Simply stated, the Reagan plan will make highly productive economic activity relatively more attractive than less (or non-) productive economic activity.

By definition, the reduction of marginal tax rates for the working poor reduces the cost of working. Thus, it makes working (and paying taxes) relatively more attractive than not working (and receiving benefits) or than working in the underground economy. This has been amply proved by the Puerto Rican tax rate reductions which delivered both increased tax revenues and increased tax rolls.

The reduction of marginal tax rates for the highly productive (and the highly paid) reduces the cost of being highly productive. Thus, it makes great economic productivity relatively more attractive than less productive or tax-avoidance activity. The supply-side irony is that the rich actually pay more tax dollars to the government after their marginal tax rates are reduced. This occurred after the Coolidge and Kennedy tax cuts and after Representative Steiger's recent halving of the capital gains tax rates.

MARTIN NUSSBAUM

. . . Pentagon supplying

Claremont Calif.

To the Editors: Thanks to *Commonweal* from everyone who cares about human survival for your lead editorial of June 5 about "President Reagan's Dangerous Mixture."

The mixture, of course, is an irresponsible and incredible increase in multi-billions to be thrown at the Pentagon, coupled with almost equally irresponsible tax cuts, mainly for the rich. It was high time someone pointed out the great deception of the people of which the Reagan administration is guilty. They have claimed that they were seeking deep cuts in domestic programs in order to balance the budget; that everyone must be ready to sacrifice to save the country's economy; that they were going to balance the budget and curb inflation; and that in all this the poor would not be hurt.

Every one of those claims is false.

The truth is that the Reagan program is one of transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich, from life-sustaining programs to death-assuring ones. The further truth is that the *only* people who are being asked to sacrifice are the poor, especially the working poor and the middle-bracket people. The wealthy and the near-wealthy will make no sacrifices at all but will be rewarded just for being rich.

As for balancing the budget, it is almost certain that the deficits in the coming four years will be the largest ones this nation has ever known, just as *Commonweal* points out in its excellent editorial.

What Reagan is doing is *not* asking people to endure cuts in their nutrition, diets, education, health care, and programs to protect the air we need to breathe, in order to balance the budget and reduce inflation. He is demanding these sacrifices by the people in order to take even more money than is to be saved by the cuts and give it to the Pentagon to increase our overkill and to the nuclear industry in the form of still greater subsidies. Again, my thanks to *Commonweal*.

JERRY VOORHIS

Bloody even-handedness

Newark, N.J.

To the Editors: The new American Ambassador to El Salvador, Deane R. Hinton, as quoted in a UPI dispatch, June 16, said: "No one would pretend the human rights situation is what it should be, neither the military commanders I have talked to nor the civilian members of the junta, but they are trying. I will continue to pursue human rights cases, particularly those cases involving American citizens. But I will do it quietly, without planning any news conference to denounce anything or anybody."

Ah. Clearly a stance of magisterial impartiality, in which silence assures evenhanded justice and the tortured and the torturer are treated alike, scrupulously so. But, withal, it conforms nicely to President Reagan's directives.

CHARLES O'FLAHERTY

The personal Merton

Racine, Wisc.

To the Editors: I would like to comment on James Baker's fine reviews of the quintet of late Merton books, under the head "A Kinsman to So Many" [Apr. 10]. With his estimate of James Forest's *Thomas Merton, A Pictorial Biography*, that because of its brevity and splendid photography it will be much read by future generations, I heartily agree. (I recently received a photograph of John Paul II holding the book in his hand.) Ross Labrie's *The Art of Thomas Merton* is superbly that. For its scholarly treatment of Merton as narrative writer, diarist, essayist, and poet, I doubt if it can ever be matched. *The Solitary Explorer* by Elena Malits admirably covers his search—what if an early *New York Times* reviewer featured three factual errors in its first paragraph; there are a number of inaccuracies in Monica Furlong's well researched *Thomas Merton, A Biography*, as well. But to suggest that there is no further need for Michael Mott's "official" biography is far from the truth. As a noted scholar he will be able to give us a close, even balancing of the Merton biographical data that only the private papers and journals can supply, and which, as official biographer;

(Continued on page 447)

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mi. 48106. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York. N.Y. Copyright © 1981 Commonweal Publishing Co.

Illustrations: Cover, Gorell, Rita Corbin; p. 425, Cork; p. 427, Margolis; p. 428, Gorrell; p. 429, Huck, *Racine Labor*, Taylor, *Albuquerque Tribune*; p. 435, Mitro; pp. 436, 438, Emil Antonucci; pp. 440, 441, 442, Rita Corbin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

Volume CVIII, Number 14

Correspondence 418

Editorials 419

Draw of the Irish: *Sean Cronin* 422

The limits of allegiance: *John Garvey* 423

Principles of abolition: *Thomas Powers* 424

June 26: a day in the life of Congress: *Nancy Amidei* 427

Neoconservatism vs. conservatism?: *Isidore Silver* 429

The Dinner Party a church supper?: *Exchange of views* 431

Screen: *Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.* 434

Eichmann twenty years later: *James Bernauer* 436

Books

About the Holocaust: A Double Dying, Roads to Extinction, At the Mind's Limits, The Crime and Punishment of I.G. Farben, Less Than Slaves, Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution, Voices from the Holocaust, Witness to the Holocaust, Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945, The Terrible Secret, Avenue of the Righteous, Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed, Anus Mundi, The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors, The Tremendum: *Robert Leiter* 438

Staff

Editor: James O'Gara
Executive Editor: Peter Steinfels
Assistant Editor: David Toolan
Columnists: John Garvey, Frank Getlein, Abigail McCarthy, Thomas Powers
Editorial Assistant: Anne Robertson
Movies: Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.
Poetry: Rosemary Deen, Marie Ponsot
Staff: Karen F. Silva, Harriette Balsky, Jacqueline Reeves
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonweal, A Review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Publishing Co., 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. Telephone: (212) MU 3-2042. Yearly subscriptions, U.S. and Canada, $22; foreign, $24. Special two-year rate: $39; foreign, $43. Single copy, $1.

commonweal

SCUTTLING THE WORK ETHIC

FOR YEARS conservatives have complained that liberal social programs often had quite unexpected consequences, and sometimes the conservatives were right. But now that they are in power, have the conservatives in their turn considered the unanticipated consequences of some of their own plans?

Take the emasculation job that the Reagan budget carried out on the Comprehensive Employment and Training (CETA) system and on the entire idea of job-training programs. No one denies that CETA stood in need of reform. It is in reality run not by the federal government but by state and local agencies and non-profit institutions; despite Reagan rhetoric on the value of local initiative, many of CETA's faults can be traced to this fact. Lacking close federal supervision, some local officials used CETA money to fill jobs with people they normally would have hired anyway; the job-training aspect of the program was bypassed. But despite such abuses a large part of the CETA program was successful, and each year it helped thousands of people to move into the job market, with many of these thousands eventually making their way up from welfare through a CETA job and then into employment and taxpayer status in private industry. As Nancy Amidei makes plain elsewhere in this issue, the exact details of the Reagan budget are still not clear, due to the haste with which it was passed without debate. But Mr. Reagan clearly had his way on all major items on his wish list. One of these, very significantly, was a plan to cut the funds for CETA at least in half, allotting the money that was appropriated in "block grants" to states and localities, and this was matched by a similar dismantling effort on the Labor Department's job-training system. Such shotgun attacks on CETA and job-training programs seem odd coming from those supposedly committed to reducing the welfare rolls and encouraging the work ethic. Wasn't there an old warning about being penny-wise and pound-foolish?

Or consider the administration's approach to welfare. Though you would never guess it from listening to some political speeches, most welfare recipients are children and their single-parent mothers. The number of able-bodied beneficiaries available to go to work is minimal. Despite these facts, welfare remains a favorite target for know-nothing indignation. It is certainly true that welfare cheating should be rigidly weeded out, like any white-collar crime; that any welfare recipient able to get gainful employment should do so; that government policy should be designed to encourage those who try to work. Who would deny these propositions, which conservative candidates for public office have been running on for years? Nonetheless, the actual effect of administration economic proposals on welfare would have quite a contrary effect, as indicated by a recent study carried out by the University of Chicago's Center for the Study of Welfare Policy.

The first thing to note is that during a typical month, almost thirty percent of the heads of welfare families do in fact get some work. Another sixteen percent are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

actively searching for work. Over the course of a year, the heads of almost half of all Aid to Dependent Children families—most of them women—do in fact work. They have good reason. In Texas, for example, a family of four on welfare receives $140 a month; try living on that some time. With welfare payments in many other states comparably low, the incentive to work is always there—provided that the recipient is not drastically penalized for outside earnings. But under the Reagan budget it is precisely the working poor receiving assistance for their children who will be the hardest hit. Cutbacks in income supplements and other kinds of help will mean that many working parents would be just as well off if they stayed home and did not work at all—indeed, in some cases they would be positively better off if they stayed home because of the expenses connected with going to work. In the New York area, plans are already being made to shut down over one hundred child-care centers; this will mean hundreds of now employed mothers will have no place for their children while they are on the job. How many of them will be forced to quit and seek welfare? And in other areas aid to enable poor mothers to send their children to such child-care centers is scheduled to be kept only for welfare mothers, cut off for poor working mothers. Is this a way to encourage work over welfare?

Given all this, the question follows: how can measures that eliminate training people to work and that penalize people who do work be considered enlightened? For that matter, how can they be considered conservative?

TIME RUNNING OUT

Like the proverbial lady whose virtue is questioned, the Reagan administration reacted angrily to the charge of African leaders, meeting in Kenya in late June, that Washington was now in the process of forming an "unholy alliance" with South African racists. The Africans' accusation may contain more than a little of conference-provoked rhetoric. U.N. Ambassador Jean Fitzpatrick's ill-starred talks with a South African security chief whose "business" she professed not to know may not mean much and then again perhaps the African leaders are reading too much into the successful visit of Prime Minister Botha to Washington and the new derailments of efforts to remove Namibia from South African tutelage. But in the absence of a stated policy toward the region, isn't concern, and even some suspicion, justified? Assistant Secretary of State Chester A. Crocker's recent testimony before the House Subcommittee on African Affairs, moreover, did little to alleviate the fog. He offered a slogan, "constructive engagement," to replace "confrontation" — with no specifics. As in other areas, a definite public policy is "under review."

Any review now must surely take account of the recent report of the Rockefeller-funded commission on U.S. policy toward South Africa headed by Ford Foundation President Franklin A. Thomas, titled *South Africa: Time Running Out*. (Univ. of California Press, $8.95, 517 pp.). The report makes its relatively modest recommendations only after presenting a meticulous — and yes, highly readable — portrait of South African realities: the history of settlement, segregation, and apartheid, an analysis of trends among both whites and the subject populations, and a close study of U.S. strategic interests in the area. More, it gives flesh to its analysis by including transcripts of "South Africans talking" (à la Studs Terkel). Curbing Communist influence in the region (where anyone advocating change wins that label from dominant Afrikaaners), keeping open the Cape sea lanes through which much of our oil passes, and insuring the supply of strategically important chromium and ferrometals, are all vastly important; but so also is the task of advancing political freedom and civil liberties for all blacks and coloreds in South Africa — and the commission recognizes that a failure to push for this objective would not only accelerate the trend to violence in South Africa, but could badly damage race relations here at home. Finally, says the report, what we do or fail to do in South Africa will affect diplomatic and commercial relations with the rest of black Africa — whose annual trade with us is now four times that of our trade with South Africa.

Given the mounting militancy of blacks, coloreds and Indians since the Sharpeville (1960) and Soweto (1976) incidents, and the increasing solidarity of these groups, and given the continued intransigence of the Botha government, says the report, "the choice is not between 'slow peaceful change' and 'quick violent change' but between a slow, uneven, sporadically violent evolutionary process and a slow but much more violent descent into civil war." The commission recommended five policy objectives, with appropriate actions to bolster them:

- *To demonstrate the fundamental and continuing opposition of the U.S. to apartheid* by broadening the arms and nuclear embargo to cover foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies, and by withholding diplomatic recognition and economic aid from the independent homelands. Further, there should be a moratorium on the expansion of operations by U.S. companies, and those not there should stay out.
- *To promote genuine political power-sharing* by systematically exerting influence on the South African government — for instance, by reducing diplomatic representation, or barring certain categories of goods, services, and technology from export to South Africa. To take one example, need we supply them with oil drilling technology?
- *To support organizations inside South Africa working for change,* assisting the development of black leadership and promoting black welfare.
- *To assist the economic development of other states in southern Africa,* including the reduction of their economic dependence on South Africa. (With its multiracial rule, the economic survival of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe would be of great symbolic importance for its southern neighbor.)
- *To reduce the impact of stoppage of key mineral imports from South Africa* by stockpiling, diversifying sources of supply, and developing the transport systems of other mineral-supplying states in the region.

The Thomas commission is under no illusion that change

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will come easily in South Africa, or that the U.S. leverage is great there. As its own analysis of trends makes clear, South Africa's increasing international isolation since the first U.N. embargo of 1963 spurred a drive for economic and military self-sufficiency that has been highly successful. For this reason, along with the geography of the region, analogies with Zimbabwe, the Shah's Iran, or Somoza's Nicaragua do not apply; Prime Minister Pieter W. Botha's government stands in firmly brutal control. Black leaders know this well; they do not expect change to come quickly, and at this date many recognize compromises will have to be made. Looking at the history of the black struggle here, however, does not encourages. For black willingness to compromise, to limit demands, to accommodate, (the rule rather than the exception, until recently) has rarely been answered by any corresponding generosity of spirit on the part of the ruling National Party. The real horror here — and the Thomas report avoids discussing it at length — is that if ever there was a place where Marxist diatribes against religion-as-ideology applied, it is South Africa. With some notable exceptions, the Dutch Reformed theology of the dominant whites lodges racism deep in the souls of the pious. For this very reason, with whatever leverage the U.S. has, the strongest measures are called for. A U.S. foreign policy determined by the criteria of anti-Communism and commercial profit, in this case, cries to heaven for vengeance.

TRIAGE IN THE WOMB

A month ago, it was prominently reported that two physicians had inserted a long, hollow needle into the heart of a fetus of at least five-months age, drained it of half its blood, and killed it. The operation was treated as a triumph of medical technique, which in a way it was. The physicians had managed to kill this fetus without injuring the twin brother who shared their mother's womb.

This was no "glob of cells" that was, as the report in the *New England Journal of Medicine* put it, "exsanguinated." It was a male individual. He was probably about ten inches long—somewhere between the width and the height of this page. His features were tiny but perfect in their detail. His nervous system was developed. He responded to stimuli. His brain and his heart had long since been active. It took two tries to puncture the latter.

Why was this twin killed? He was not the product of an accident; he was apparently conceived deliberately by a couple who wanted a child. But not, as it turned out, this child. Tests showed that he—though not his twin brother—was afflicted with the chromosome abnormality characteristic of Down's syndrome and therefore of below-normal intelligence. His mother, the doctors reported, "desperately wanted to have the normal child but could not face the burden of caring for an abnormal child for the rest of her life." Further, the mother believed that having an abnormal twin would be an "unhealthy experience" for the normal one.

This was, we must understand, a life-saving operation, at least according to the new rules of pre-natal medicine. If the two physicians had not brought their exquisite skills to the task of killing only one fetus, the parents would have found other medical help in killing *both* fetuses. Better one should die rather than two. That was the crucial factor, and the same threat would have been present were it the sex of one of the twins, rather than the potential intelligence, to which the parents objected, or were it even the fact of having twins at all, rather than a single child. The physicians abstain from all moral judgment in their report. The parents wanted it. The law permits it. They were only following orders.

Why complain about one abortion when so many more, even later ones, occur daily? Because this one was made a front-page story, with only a hint of embarrassment at the moral implications. Because those who say they defend the "right to choose" but personally "abhor" abortions, or are worried about what its widespread acceptance portends for our humanity, have greeting this case with a deafening silence. Because we don't like the happy ending too many people are ready to see in this episode. Yes, one couple is no longer childless. One baby boy is alive and well. Two physicians have gained admiration for their prowess. *And* one tiny male, guilty of being conceived with an extra chromosome and the potential of subnormal intelligence, has been executed in cold blood.

MORE ON PAKISTAN

In our July 3 issue we ran an editorial called "The Pakistan Bomb." In it we argued against giving President/Dictator Zia of that nation $3 billion primarily in military aid, citing as one of our reasons that the United States had failed to extract from Pakistan any pledge that it would give up its drive for a nuclear bomb and adding that officials of the Reagan administration seemed unperturbed by that fact. A day or two after the issue containing that editorial went into the mail, Under Secretary of State James L. Buckley testified on the subject in the Senate. The following verbatim excerpt is taken from the account of that testimony in the *New York Times:*

> WASHINGTON, June 24—Pakistan has given the Reagan administration "absolute assurances" that it is neither developing nor planning to develop nuclear weapons, Under Secretary of State James L. Buckley said today.
>
> "I was assured by the ministers and by the President himself that it was not the intention of the Pakistan Government to develop nuclear weapons," he told a Senate Government Affairs subcommittee.
>
> Mr. Buckley added that Pakistan, which has not signed a 1968 treaty to curb the spread of nuclear weapons technology, had made no promise not to seek a weapons-making or nuclear explosions such as one by India in 1974.
>
> "One has to make a distinction between the nuclear option and nuclear weapon," he told the Senate panel.

Does that clear things up for you?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Report from Ireland

DRAW OF THE IRISH

WEAK GOVERNMENT, TOUGH PROBLEMS

THE IRISH REPUBLIC'S June 11th general election was a draw. The voters could not make up their minds, and the result was inconclusive. The Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Charles J. Haughey, saw his Fianna Fáil party lose a little under five percent of the popular vote for 78 seats in the 166-member Dáil (National Assembly). He needed 84 for an overall majority. On June 30th he was voted out of office by two votes, 81 to 79. One independent socialist voted for Dr. FitzGerald, another independent voted for Mr. Haughey, one was elected speaker and thus was not eligible to vote, three abstained, and two are in prison. The result is that Ireland has a weak government and insoluble problems, political and economic.

The new Prime Minister, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, is an economist, which should be of some help with some of the problems. But he is governing in coalition with the mildly-socialist Labor party. Whereas he wants indirect taxation, his partners want to tax the wealthy. Dr. FitzGerald, Minister for Foreign Affairs under the conservative Liam Cosgrave for much of the 1970s, was fighting his first election as leader of Fine Gael, a party that even Ray Cline when head of intelligence at the State Department couldn't make up his mind about—one year he reported it left-of-center, the next year right-of-center—but which may be described more accurately as conservative and mildly nationalist, in contrast with the populist and strongly nationalist Fianna Fáil, Eamon de Valera's party.

Fine Gael has 65 seats and Labor 15. With the help of three independents, Dr. FitzGerald's government will stagger along for some months until a crisis unseats him, or he decides that the time is ripe for him to call new elections following a snap defeat carefully planned. Meanwhile, Ireland's problems will stagger along with him. There is no way out of the situation short of a miracle. Mrs. Thatcher could help but she won't. She has her own problems and she can't solve them and Northern Ireland is not even number two. Dr. FitzGerald has a long-range solution—confederation. What is needed is an immediate solution. The North is no longer a viable political or economic unit and the Republic is being sucked into the maelstrom. Mr. Haughey, if given a mandate, might have avoided this. One is less sure of Dr. FitzGerald.

Reservations on Dr. FitzGerald have nothing to do with his ability. He has a good clear mind and a liberal conscience. All things being equal—which they are not—he would make an able Prime Minister. He will head a cabinet of reactionaries (supplied by his own party) and reformers (supplied by Labor). The former are strong on law-and-order in the Republic. The latter want more of the welfare state in a country suffering 21 percent inflation and 11 percent unemployment. Ireland's foreign debt is enormous and one of these days the International Monetary Fund may be suggesting to Dr. FitzGerald how to cut his cloth to his measure. As an economist he will understand what they are talking about. As a politician he may find their recommendations difficult to apply. The Republic's current account, which covers trade and certain unilateral transfers, had a gap of about $996.4 million at the end of 1980; it may have a deficit of over $1.3 billion at the end of this year, according to OECD estimates.

Not all is gloom and doom. Foreign investment, especially American, in industrial development is continuing—but not at a fast enough rate to provide jobs for the growing under-twenty-five population. The EEC has brought the state out of its permanent depression and there's no going back to it. The independent Irish pound continues to fall against sterling and of course the dollar. Ireland pays for its imports in these two currencies. The Irish pound is maintained by foreign borrowing. Dr. FitzGerald may be forced to deflate—or have deflation imposed upon him.

The Republic earns its living from agriculture, particularly beef. When it broke with Britain economically, by joining the European Economic Community, farm prices rose and Ireland's smallholders tasted affluence for the first time in their lives. Farm sizes expanded; EEC grants improved the land. While the Irish currency was tied to sterling this was fine. In 1978 the Republic cut the sterling link and joined the European Monetary System. Farm incomes tumbled and are now down about 55 percent from 1978. The farmer would favor devaluation of the Irish pound—or a government subsidy as a hedge against inflation.

The economic problems are minor compared with the political problem of Northern Ireland. It's a wound that won't heal. It threw Mr. Haughey out of office, although surveys indicate the electorate felt he was more likely to resolve this question than Dr. FitzGerald. This confidence accounts for the fact that Mr. Haughey received such a high vote—high in the circumstances of his dismal economic performace since he took over the government from Jack Lynch in a kind of coup eighteen months ago. His party is split. A large number of the sitting deputies do not trust him. Eleven years ago he was relieved of his duties, arrested and put on trial for conspiring to import arms into the Republic. He was acquitted, but his political career was in ruins. He never referred publicly to the case again, but dedicated himself to reclimbing the greasy pole and succeeded. The arms trial helped with the nationalist section of the population. When he succeeded Mr. Lynch, he had the confidence of the nationalists, that is to say the Catholics, of Northern Ireland. Any solution of that problem must have their consent.

Last December Mr. Haughey held a summit meeting in Dublin with Mrs. Thatcher. By all accounts they got along well: two realists who could speak for and to the hardliners in their respective countries. Their talks were secret. They agreed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to set up study groups to examine "the totality of relationships" between Ireland and Britain. No one is sure what this means and there have been many interpretations. Mrs. Thatcher says it has nothing to do with the constitutional arrangements between Northern Ireland and Britain. Mr. Haughey says everything is on the table. It could have gone on like that and Mr. Haughey could have won his election, despite the economy, but for Bobby Sands and the other H-Block hunger strikers, Mr. Haughey asked Mrs. Thatcher to be less intransigent. She refused. In Ireland they began to speak ironically of "the special relationship" between the two. An ad hoc committee, dominated by the Provisional IRA, decided to run prisoner-candidates in the Republic's election. They took two seats from Mr. Haughey. If one of the elected deputies dies on hunger strike, he'll present the new Irish government with its first constitutional and international crisis and the Irish people with another nationalist martyr.

Kieron Doherty is the likelier one to die. The electors of Cavan and Monaghan, two Ulster counties that are part of the Republic, gave him more than nine thousand votes. The vote was by proportional representation and he won bipartisan support. He had little political organization, but all of Irish history helped him.

The media in the Republic hardly knew Kieron Doherty's name, or those of his fellow-candidates. They paid their campaigns little attention. They said they would draw few votes, that the economic issue would dominate all. They were proved right in a half-prediction: Síle de Valera, granddaughter of the founder of Fianna Fáil, lost her seat in the affluent district of Dublin South because she was "too strident on the North." But the border counties were on fire. I talked to the chairman of the H-Block Committee eleven days before the vote. He could not believe the reports he was getting from workers in the field. These reports were understatements. The prisoners in the Maze left the Republic without a government to tackle its problems. Given her head, Mrs. Thatcher may destabilize the politics of the Irish Republic as she and her predecessors have destabilized the politics and the economy of Northern Ireland. A timebomb is ticking.

Mr. Haughey was to continue his talks with Mrs. Thatcher in the next few months. Dr. FitzGerald will take his place. *The Economist* has suggested he may sabotage the talks "by insisting that the Ulster Unionists be drawn into them and by insisting that the agenda be made explicit." Dr. FitzGerald believes in "a good neighbor attitude in the North—and good relations between North and South." His goodwill may not be good enough. And what will he tell Mrs. Thatcher when they meet? For Ireland, the prospect just now is gloomy.

SEAN CRONIN

(Sean Cronin, just returned from Ireland, is the Washington correspondent of the Irish Times *of Dublin.)*

The next issue will be dated August 28. Following that, *Commonweal* will return to its bi-weekly schedule.

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

LIMITS OF ALLEGIANCE

LOYALTY TO DEEPER LOYALTIES

ONE NIGHT when I was in college I found myself sitting with a number of European students at dinner. The name of Willy Brandt came up, and a German graduate student reacted strongly. "Brandt! That swine! He ran off to Sweden when he should have stayed to defend his country." "You mean fight for Hitler?" someone asked. "Of course," the German student answered. He had straight blond hair and small round wire-rimmed glasses, just like the Nazis in the movies. I mentioned this to a friend, this uncritical and immediate defense of a form of patriotism which murdered millions, and my friend admitted that because of the way he had been brought up he would probably have allowed himself to be drafted into the Nazi army, and in all likelihood he would have obeyed any order given to him. He wasn't comfortable about this; he hoped that he would have had the courage to resist if he were ordered to do something that was obviously evil, but he was not at all sure what that was in a wartime situation, and he was not at all sure that he would ever feel free to make the choice to disobey.

I remembered these things as I watched a news special about America's defense, and heard soldiers talking about the tactical use of nuclear weapons. No doubt all of these men would obey orders, whatever the orders were, just as previous soldiers were willing to bomb Dresden and Hiroshima. There is more to this than the question of obeying orders, of course. The men who bombed Dresden and Hiroshima did what they did not only because they were ordered to do so, but because they were absolutely convinced of the need to defeat Hitler and the Axis powers. The question which became especially clear with Hiroshima, however, is this: is *anything* permitted to defeat an enemy? Are there no limits at all to what governments may do in the name of self-defense?

While it is important to continue pressing for disarmament and accord between nations, there is something even more important to be considered. The German student and my friend's response made me realize that the major question is not what an army may be permitted to do, or the limits to be placed on weaponry, but the problem of obedience itself. Should I be willing to serve? If given an order, should I assume that it ought to be obeyed?

This is an important educational matter — educational, because it has everything to do with what we teach our children about their obligation to society, to government, and to the church. If we teach a form of loyalty which assumes the decency of those in authority, if we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

allow our children to believe that a soldier should obey orders without question, or a citizen must pay taxes or obey the summons to join the army, we are laying the groundwork for more of the horror that has marked our century: total warfare, and the destruction of millions. It has been argued that there simply must be a more or less unchallenged chain of command for society to work at all; unless people obey those in authority there will be chaos. But we really must consider what obedience has brought us. The fact that he was obeying orders was Eichmann's chief defense.

We should not teach our children wholesale cynicism or an individualism which would do away with the idea of any obligation at all. There are loyalties deeper than the allegiance which is ordinarily asked by the state or the church, loyalties to what state and church are supposed to be about, but too often are not. It is not disloyal to wonder whether the institution — whatever it is — is being well served by those who are temporarily in charge, nor is it disloyal to judge an institution in the light of what it claims to be about. When America's support of dictatorships is allowed to go unchallenged in any serious way, something important about America has been allowed to die. The intention of an anti-Communist foreign policy is not what is wrong; it is clear to most people by now that Communism is a bad idea whose time may be passing. Poland is wonderful news. But it is a betrayal of American assumptions about liberty to support a Somoza in the name of anti-Communism, and the argument that the Sandinistas aren't very decent either is not a worthy response. America simply should not support the sort of people who send home other people's heads as a warning to behave.

To take a less serious, but still very serious, example from the church, it is necessary to judge the hard-heartedness of Catholic canon law in the light of the Gospel. It is not the intention of the regulations surrounding marriage and divorce which is in question; it is the pastoral effect of enforcing the laws we have, which are easier on mass murderers than on those who have remarried after divorce. Jesus's teaching on divorce is clear, and clearly opposed to divorce. But his teaching on justice to the poor is also clear; so is his teaching about laying up treasure for ourselves, and on loving our enemies. Soldiers and people with fat bank accounts are not kept from communion; they are admitted, and called on to repent, and be transformed.

Questioning those in authority, and where necessary resisting them, is not disloyal. It may be the result of deeper loyalties. In disobeying Creon, Antigone is obedient to something more profoundly important than the laws of the city. Thomas More, the loyal servant of the king, knew that his loyalty had limits. Wherever allegiance is equated with unquestioning obedience it has led people into trouble. There are exceptions: in fairy tales they have to do with orders which come from obviously magic sources. In religious history the unquestionable orders come from God, as when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. I don't think this can be extended to include the orders of generals or judges. The only unquestioning loyalty we are allowed is our obedience to God, and even here there are questions and struggles: Job is more admirable than Abraham, because he questions God. And although God's answer to Job seems a rebuke to the whole idea that God can be questioned, the strong implication is that an honest man must question even God. "I burn with anger against you," God says to Job's comforters, who offered pious answers to Job's anguished questions, "for not speaking truthfully about me as my servant Job has done."

As long as questioning those in authority is seen as a special vocation, the prophetic call of a chosen few, we are in danger. We have one good example in our time of a community which resisted, not assuming that resistance was for extraordinary or heroic people. Denmark is arguably the only nation which comes out of World War II looking good. The English and Americans did little to stop the slaughter of the Jews; when occupied by the Nazis, France caved in. Denmark, occupied, resisted. When the Nazis threatened to enforce the law which required Jews to wear the yellow star, King Christian let it be known that if they did so he would wear the yellow star himself, and call on all Danes to join him. The Nazis gave up on that one. Then, in a massive act of resistance, the Danes managed to smuggle virtually every Danish Jew out of Denmark. An army looks like a weak thing next to that sort of spirit. The example of Denmark has not been praised or studied enough. It shows us that when resistance becomes a communal undertaking, a form of common sense, it can save the soul of a nation.

JOHN GARVEY

Of several minds: *Thomas Powers*

PRINCIPLES OF ABOLITION

EIGHT REASONS FOR GETTING RID OF THE BOMB

IN 1945, even before the Trinity test proved an atomic bomb could be made to work, a sudden wave of concern or alarm swept the laboratories where the new weapon had been fashioned. Military authorities had done their best to keep everybody in the dark, to isolate Oak Ridge, the Met Lab in Chicago, and Los Alamos, and to treat all general discussion of the bomb as a violation of security. Scientists didn't like it, but for the most part went along. But early in 1945, when the magnitude and the imminence of the bomb became apparent, the scientists—in a single, spontaneous, almost convulsive awakening—suddenly grasped the thing whole: the bomb was big enough to wreck our civilization, there was no defense, any determined nation could build one, an arms race could result in stockpiles of thousands, something had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be done. Churchill and Truman were slow to understand the bomb was not simply bigger. For the Pentagon, then as later, a weapon was a weapon. It was the scientists alone, throughout 1945, who understood what had happened, and what must be done.

Robert Bacher, at Los Alamos, was one of them. He had been working on the bomb since 1943. In August, 1945, he personally checked out the core of a bomb intended for a third Japanese city, while a military team waited outside, motor running, to carry it to the airport for the first leg of its flight to the Pacific. At the last minute orders arrived not to send the core. Instead it remained at Los Alamos. The American stockpile of nuclear weapons may be said to have begun at that moment. In the following months Bacher was active with the Association of Los Alamos Scientists—known without irony as ALAS—in what came to be called the scientists' movement. It was clear to Bacher what had to be done: the world had ten years at the outside to find a way to control nuclear weapons, or some awful calamity would eventually follow. The ten years passed, nothing was achieved, the calamity is still pending. Now a professor emeritus at the California Institute of Technology and a veteran of many government commissions, Bacher hopes he was wrong, that the world's failure to reach agreement does not really mean disaster. But the hope is not robust. "It's a miracle we've got this far," he said recently. Perhaps it was a miracle. Perhaps we've been given time for a second effort. Who can say? One thing is clear: attempts to control nuclear weapons in the last thirty-six years have failed. There are thousands now, and thousands more on the way. Nothing stands in the way of the disaster Bacher and so many others foresaw but fear, and the hope that fear is enough. The scientists who were active in 1945, asked for a gambler's guess of our chances now, fall into two rough groups. Some think we may squeak through. Others think not. It seems to be a question of temperament. Whatever they think, naturally all are hopeful. Talking to these scientists, or to others in what is called the national security community, one hears a great deal about hope. It is hope naked, hope pure, hope unalloyed with anything hard enough to point to as an actual reason. At this point in our history, it seems clear, optimism must be blind. We have built thousands of nuclear warheads, and we hope they won't be used.

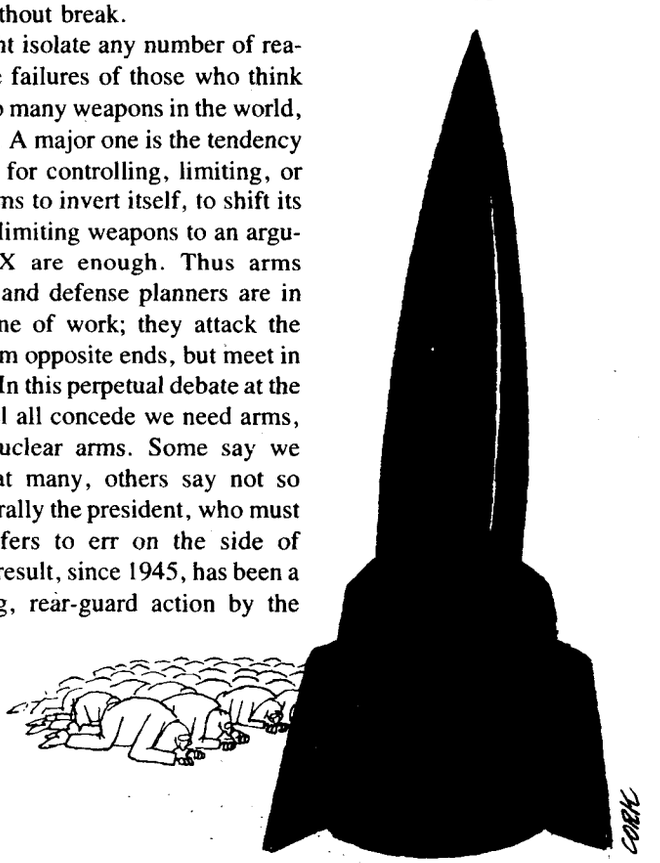
Is this the best we can do?

One should not be too quick to answer. It may very well be the best. The history of efforts to establish varying degrees of international control of nuclear weapons—beginning with the ambitious and clear-sighted Acheson-Lilienthal plan of 1946—is dense with the serious work of able men. William Foster, Gerard Smith, Paul Warnke, Henry Kissinger, and Cyrus Vance, as well as many others both in and out of government, in this country and elsewhere, have done their best to fashion useful and enduring agreements and to explain the importance of the undertaking. Arms control is not a subject which has been neglected in print or in fact. But the history of these efforts is a history of failure, for the most part, while the history of the arms-builders records one triumph after another, without break.

One might isolate any number of reasons for the failures of those who think there are too many weapons in the world, not too few. A major one is the tendency of any plan for controlling, limiting, or reducing arms to invert itself, to shift its focus from limiting weapons to an argument that X are enough. Thus arms negotiators and defense planners are in the same line of work; they attack the problem from opposite ends, but meet in the middle. In this perpetual debate at the official level all concede we need arms, including nuclear arms. Some say we need a great many, others say not so many. Naturally the president, who must decide, prefers to err on the side of safety. The result, since 1945, has been a slow, losing, rear-guard action by the arms limiters, and the building of a great many strategic weapons—not so many, perhaps, as the military would have liked, but more than enough to break the back of our civilization, when used.

This pattern is not reason for abandoning arms negotiations, but for something else—the building of a constituency which might take a different approach. The prospects for a new movement of this sort are dim at the moment. What might be the occasion for a spontaneous arousal on the necessary scale, short of a major war? This I cannot answer. But if such a movement came into being—a genuinely abolitionist movement, prepared to forego nuclear weapons entirely, to work for *none*—on what basic principles might it build an argument? How might it justify—not only to the world's military and political leaders, but more importantly to itself—a claim that nuclear weapons are too dangerous and too wanton to possess in any number at all? It seems to me there are eight basic principles on which an abolitionist movement might found itself. All are in the nature of givens.

1. *It can happen*. Nuclear weapons do



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not make war impossible; they only ensure it will be terrible. The theory of deterrence is that war is an act of aggrandizement, and that nothing can prevent it but fear of the consequences. History suggests that war is something else—a characteristic and habitual form of human behavior, a thing men do—sometimes for one reason, sometimes for another. If we do not know the root causes of war how can we hope to prevent it—*forever*?

2. *All victims are equal*. How are we to choose between human beings, and say that the death of one somehow matters more than the death of another? War happens to both sides; it is the whole loss which diminishes mankind and is cause for sadness—not just the loss on our side. Very few of the dead had anything to do with starting it; war simply came and took their lives away. In the sort of war where millions die the balance of the millions is immaterial. All the millions were innocent. Any serious attempt to save them must attempt to save all of them. Attempts to save our side only are simply military measures under a different name.

3. *Nothing can be gained or preserved commensurate with the loss*. War on a global scale cannot be said to be about anything. Nations have their differences, but it is impossible to conceive of one large enough or important enough to require the wrecking of the world. Such a war would simply happen. The issues involved at the outset would be overwhelmed by the war itself. Nothing the United States or the Soviet Union could do to each other in a non-military way could ever equal what they can do to each other in a military way. In the past it might have been said that war was about who wins. Now it is about what survives.

4. *Weapons threaten; they don't defend*. As a practical matter one can't protect oneself by threatening others. Threats elicit threats. There are distinctively defensive measures a nation might take, but building strategic weapons is not one of them. Thirty-five years of trying to guarantee our safety with strategic weapons has made us about as unsafe as any nation in history; it is the same for the Russians. This ability to injure each other has become the deepest source of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union; it is the bedrock of defense policy. But defense is a misnomer; what we buy, for the most part, are not things which defend, but things which threaten.

5. *There is no military solution*. Weapons have not made us safe; more weapons cannot be expected to do any better. Attempts to gain or hold an advantage in weapons have been the motor of the arms race, and have only increased our common danger. The fifteen thousand strategic warheads possessed by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. threaten our civilization. The twenty-five thousand we are expected to have by 1985 may threaten human life in this hemisphere. Eventually we may acquire weapons enough to threaten all human life on the planet. This is not something either of us wants to do, and it is not something either of us would risk if it weren't for the peculiar context of pride and will which forms the background of an arms race. It is the weapons which threaten us, not the political differences. The problem isn't too few weapons, but too many. We need to get rid them, not build more. But insofar as the military sees weapons (theirs) as a problem, it insists that weapons (ours) are the solution.

6. *There are no villains*. The problem is not rapacious monopoly capitalism or militant Communism. Such claims are only a convenience. The scale of the present arms race is unprecedented, but otherwise it's the common stuff of history. Our reason for it is the common one too. The strategic weapons possessed by both sides threaten the annihilation of the other; why are we doing such a terrible thing? The easiest answer—the one that leaves us out—is villainous intent on their part, some great ambition we must resist. Thus our own military efforts can be seen as the solution to a problem. There is a problem all right, but it isn't the iniquity of the other side; it is our characteristic response to the fact of sides. The students of war have got hundreds to study; their causes come in dozens of varieties. Clearly men are ready to go to war for this reason or that reason or no reason; the reasons are only a kind of veneer. They describe without truly explaining the war. There is a corollary to the no-villains principle; if the other side isn't the problem, then we aren't the problem either. It is our nature which explains our behavior. Understanding war is not a polemical but a spiritual exercise. To free ourselves of war we must understand and transform ourselves, no easy task.

7. *We can never forget how to build nuclear weapons*. The threat they pose is now a permanent part of the human situation. Even if complete abolition of nuclear weapons were achieved, no system of international inspection or control, however extensive, could prevent their renewed manufacture in the event of a big general war. Starting from scratch in August, 1942—with no certainty for the production of fissionable material—the United States built its first nuclear device in less than three years. Next time the job would go quicker. Thus the danger posed by nuclear weapons is inseparable from the danger posed by the war itself. The weapons reflect a dangerous part of our nature, not the only one by any means. We shall be struggling with it, one way or another, for as long as we are here to struggle.

8. *We do not have to submit*. The pattern since 1945 is clear; it is one of preparation for war. Our chances of altogether escaping this war are fragile, but the prospect of failure is no reason for submission. Why wait till war proves the point? The political and military establishments of the world do not really like living under the threat of annihilation any better than we do; they simply fail to see an alternative. Thus an attempt to free ourselves of war and the fear of war may be seen as a struggle toward the light—to see the danger as a common one, to grasp our own role in the process as well as our opponent's, to comprehend that the violence of modern war is out of scale with whatever it may be said to be about,and finally to understand there is no way to threaten others without endangering ourselves in return. A move in this direction, away from war, must be personal before it can be political. It is worth undertaking for its own sake, whatever the results. We need no one's permission to begin.

THOMAS POWERS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

June 26: a day in the life of Congress

NANCY AMIDEI

ONCE UPON A TIME, the founders of this country said: "In order to form a more perfect union . . . we do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." They acknowledged the need for a federal entity, a national form of governance.

Over the centuries mutual dependence among all citizens and between state and federal governments has provided strength in time of crisis, a basis for shared action in times of peace. Throughout our history we have dealt nationally with questions too important to leave to the individual states. One hundred and twenty years ago, slavery was such a question, and we fought a civil war to resolve the issue, nationally. Early in this century we created a public health service to check the spread of communicable diseases, and later we acknowledged a national interest in producing enough medical professionals, scientists, and mathematicians. Over the years we have held that protection of basic religious and other individual liberties were matters of national concern. And we recognized a national interest in the education and support of the young, as well as a responsibility to those who can no longer work because of old age or disability. Protection of our food supply, the medicines we buy, our lands and natural resources, the air we breathe, and the safety of the water we drink was deemed too important to leave to chance and local finances.

In short, we have agreed with this nation's founders that creating the individual states and conferring certain responsibilities on them did not absolve the federal government of responsibility for all those matters which go beyond state borders.

Ronald Reagan, thirty-seventh president of the United States, does not agree. The president and his appointees have laid out a challenge that would deny two centuries, and especially the last fifty years, of American history. They would have us believe that we are no longer citizens of a national government with mutual responsibilities and a stake in securing the basic human needs of citizens wherever they may live. To them the federal government is a curious new creature: a mix of moralist, militarist, and protector of individual and corporate wealth.

On Friday, June 26, a majority of the elected representatives of people in all the states said that they share that vision of society, of national governance. No matter, apparently, that they now know with terrible certainty some of what their votes will mean:

- —more babies born with epilepsy and handicapping conditions;
- —nearly one million long-term unemployed workers with no place to turn;
- —millions of poor Americans with less than $1.30 a day for food;
- —fewer services for retarded, disabled, and troubled citizens;
- —minimum social security benefits taken away from those who depend on them;
- —disabled and elderly people forced into costly institutions or left without help;
- —a housing crisis that will now get worse;
- —workers paying twice as much or more for transportation to their jobs;
- —less protection for our air, water, and food supplies (more "Love Canals");
- —no more special legislation for abused, abandoned, troubled, and poor children;
- —the loss of more than half a million publicly-supported jobs;
- —millions more workers forced out of low-paying jobs;
- —thousands of small businesses forced to close;
- —national and state parks across the country likely to close;
- —higher state and local taxes (or fewer police, fire, and sanitation services);
- —military spending three times the level at the height of the Vietnam war;

NANCY AMIDEI, *formerly deputy assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, is the director of Food Research Action Center in Washington, D.C.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—more fear and anxiety in poor neighborhoods;
—a lower quality of life for us all.

That is what every Republican but two, and twenty-seven elected Democrats in the House of Representatives voted *for*. And they voted for it without even having seen a copy of the legislation.

They voted for a "document" that was really a collection of over five hundred mostly unnumbered pages and handwritten notes, full of pen and pencil deletions that abolished entire programs and gav e duplicate authority for others, much of it with far-reaching implications that could not be discussed or debated because the content was unknown. They voted for provisions that had been rejected by the authorizing Committees of the House (bypassing the process established to consider legislation), provisions known only to David Stockman, who is elected by no one. Unlike the days of the Johnson presidency when he masterfullyy used the process itself to win the passage of legislation, on June 26 these Representatives permitted the president and his OMB Director to supplant the legitimate process.

While other Americans were at their jobs or caring for their children, 217 elected representatives were changing their lives in ways even they did not understand. On the following Tuesday one Republican member angrily told his staff that he only learned through the papers and the angry calls coming into his office from constituents the consequences of what he had done, because David Stockman had lied. Yet only a few days earlier he was willing to cast his vote in ignorance.

On Friday, June 26, 217 members of Congress voted for all that has already been mentioned and more, to make budget reductions beyond what was required by the budget resolution adopted earlier this year.

They voted to repeal legislation for the prevention of child abuse and the care of runaway youth. They voted to forbid any "remedial action activities" for a broad range of energy research and demonstration efforts—including some involving nuclear fission. They voted to repeal omnibus social services legislation ("Title XX"), and to withhold medical care till the last trimester from poor women who are pregnant for the first time. They voted to take Social Security student benefits away. They voted to gut the program that aids schools with large populations of poor and minority children, and to end the special targeting that has assured some level of housing, sewage, water, and social services in rural areas. Under Medicare there will be new limits on home health visits, on dental coverage, on physical and occupational therapy, and on the care of those in the final stages of kidney disease. They voted to turn a host of activities with federal standards and accountability into "block grants" that give money to the states with virtually no strings attached. And, when no one was looking, they leveled the National Science Foundation and wiped out the research budgets of three other federal agencies. In these and many other areas a national consensus had developed over the years that the protections involved should not vary from state to state; on June 26 that consensus was set aside.

SOME MEMBERS were candid about what they got in return. John Breaux of Louisiana, for example, can expect support for higher subsidies to sugar cane growers that Reagan officials had earlier described as dangerously inflationary and unjustified for a generally affluent industry. Asked if this meant his vote could be bought, Breaux said "no," but it could be "rented."

And June 26 was only the first step. Over time there is to be a sweeping withdrawal of federal involvement from matters of broad societal concern. Of course, it is argued that those in need will be better off under the new discipline — once the powers of free enterprise are released from the burden of government social spending. But does anyone believe that the vote on June 26 really represented such a pragmatic calculation, and that the Representatives will swiftly reverse themselves if it turns out that the needy are not the eventual beneficiaries? No, the vote was a judgment in principle — about what "fate" has in store for millions of Americans. If poor pregnant women cannot afford to eat or see a doctor, and so have retarded, immature, or physically handicapped babies, too bad. If some states deny equal education opportunities to children because of their race or social class, and they in turn cannot become employable productive adults, too bad. If the private sector is incapable of producing housing that people can afford, and so they "squat" in abandoned buildings or crowd together in unhealthy conditions, too bad. If expensive medical care or care for physically handicapped individuals is beyond the private resources of individual families, too bad. If million go hungry, we will not let that bother us. As the youthful, well-paid David Stockman so generously put it, they'll have manage on less.

Despite his Inaugural comments, the president does intend to employ the power to tax for social purposes. All that would change are the purposes to which tax revenues are to be put. Mr. Stockman speaks with great feeling about the person

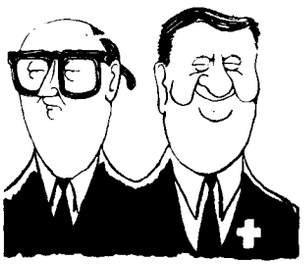
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

earning $20,000 who is taxed to provide food stamps for the worker earning $7,000. But roughly $260 billion of existing "tax expenditures" (that is, tax breaks) are also made possible by levies on everybody's income. And he is not troubled that the many citizens earning $10,000 will be taxed to provide the roughly $19,000 in new tax benefits for each of the relatively few with incomes over $200,000. That, apparently, is the new role of government: using the power to tax to ensure the very wealthy more $2,000 dresses and chauffeured limousines. Federally collected taxes will be used for a dramatically increased military budget—the merits of which have yet to be discussed—but no longer to guarantee the broad national purposes for which taxes have traditionally been collected. And the Congress elected to oversee their use has said it will no longer be accountable or responsible for how those federal tax dollars are being spent.

But even the catalogue of horrors already described is not complete. Next year David Stockman will be taking $40 billion more in spending cuts beyond the ones just detailed. The third year alone of the individual tax cut will cost the government about $100 billion; tax giveaways to business will cost the country half a trillion dollars over the next ten years. Budget reductions of that magnitude cannot come indefinitely out of Medicaid, food stamps, and CETA jobs; they will come directly out of every working family in America and the quality of all our lives.

The president argues that the twenty-eight percent of the voters who elected him and his congressional supporters gave him a mandate to change the nature of our society and government. In fact, most voters still do not understand how radically the president means to change their lives. They only know what the president has told them, and the scanty details carried in the local paper or the evening news. Even their elected representatives did not know, because they set aside their own rules, their own procedures, to vote for legislation they had not seen, for changes that had not been debated or discussed. That 217 members of the House of Representatives would abdicate their responsibilities to their constituents and cause this to occur is extraordinary. But for now, at least, the deed is done. The Republican-dominated Senate adopted much the same legislation earlier. In effect the president asked for and was given by Congress: more pain and human suffering; a non-accountable, irresponsible Congress and federal government; a defense establishment with what amounts to a blank check; a national tragedy of incalculable proportions. For the Congress, June 26 was a busy day.

TIME TO END THE COURTSHIP



Neoconservatism vs. conservatism?

ISIDORE SILVER

AFTER ONE BOOK and several articles demanding a new hard-headed "realism" in American foreign policy, Norman Podhoretz has suddenly discovered that Ronald Reagan's version of that desirable, though undefinable, trait is "appeasement," at least when applied to the proposed sale of AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia. Thus, the adage that elected officials often repudiate many of their followers (and break their hearts) once in office is seemingly again demonstrated.

Why neoconservatives should believe — in the face of the evidence — that they can make common cause with the Reaganites continues to mystify me. After all, it is no great secret that the New Right intends to destroy Senator Daniel Moynihan's political career with the same verve it successfully displayed against more traditional liberals. Indeed, it is probably true that neoconservatives such as Moynihan infuriate the New Right even more than do traditional liberals, although politicians like Reagan have become shrewd enough to appropriate neoconservative anti-liberal jeremiads for their own ends. Thus, the neoconservative-conservative romance is distinctly one-sided and unrequited, and has been since the neoconservative decision in 1972 to embrace Richard Nixon's dubious candidacy. After all, in politics as in romance, one who pursues the uncatchable — and wastes his resources in doing so — is both foolish and irrelevant. It is time to end the courtship — for quite serious reasons.

The differences between the two "conservatisms" should be profound. Such neoconservatives as Moynihan and Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer, Midge Decter, Seymour Martin Lipset, and even their right-wing flanker Irving Kristol, have three fundamental political interests: (a) strong support of Israel; (b) deep antipathy toward Communism and the Soviet Union; (c) economic revival of the declining Northeast by reallocation of both public and private funding (most neoconservatives work and live in the Northeast and would not want to move to the Sunbelt); and (d) a reaffirmation of the alleged moral and social traditions of an older America without violation of legal and constitutional norms and precedents and, indeed, by moral suasion rather than law. At least two of the

ISIDORE SILVER *teaches constitutional law and history at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

above interests are not shared by Reaganite conservatives and the third, defense of Israel, is viewed by them as a matter of pragmatic, rather than principled, necessity. Since, to the Reaganites, it appears to be more pragmatic to keep Saudi Arabia (and, now, apparently Iraq) happy, Israel's interests will always be at risk — as conservatives have demonstrated since at least 1969 when the "Rogers Plan" was floated by the Nixon administration and torpedoed by liberal opposition. Only on assertive opposition to the Soviet Union — a point held widely on the political spectrum — is there an almost unqualified agreement between neoconservative and Reaganite concerns.

Indeed, the dilemma of neoconservatism lies in the attempt to ally itself with four types of conservatives, despite an incomplete and politically fatal compatibility. Contemporary American conservatives may be (a) corporate leaders who abhor competition, free trade, and anti-trust and seek to harness government to their economic interests; (b) small entrepreneurs who dislike regulation and a tax system which seems to bear hardest on the middle-class; and (c) northern urban, ethnic industrial workers who are conservative on social issues and liberal on economic ones, and who may yet desert the president on tax and spending cuts. Neoconservatives share some interests with these groups and, when they do not, uncomfortably and silently acquiesce to others, such as those of the corporate votaries of "big" and "helpful" government.

I did mention *four* categories, but only listed three — for a good reason. The fourth type presents the greatest problem for neoconservatives precisely because the differences between the two groups are the greatest and because the Reagan administration, at its core, most truly represents that type of conservative. The New Right conservative may share some of the same background and values of the others, but *he* is a Westerner, a Southwesterner, or a newly prosperous Southerner, possessed of a passion to destroy "Eastern" power (corporate *or* governmental), and impelled by economic or religious fundamentalism (or both) to demand unquestioned conformity on both "single issues" and a programmatic attempt to redesign American institutions. The New Right is also contemptuous of neoconservatism's highest value — legal and social order — and is quite willing to upset tradition by startling means such as drastically limiting the jurisdiction of federal courts, especially in cases involving civil rights and civil liberties.

The new right is nothing if not populist (in form) while neoconservatives deeply mistrust populism in both its historical and contemporary versions. Historical populism was a mixed, largely left-wing farmer movement which single-mindedly derided Eastern banking interests, urbanization, and, at times, both Catholics and Jews. Since most neoconservatives are either Jewish or Catholic, live in urban enclaves, are tolerant of (though uncomfortable with) the former Eastern economic domination of the rest of the country, and believe that *vox populi* is not *vox dei*, they have few common programmatic ties to populism. As the New Right becomes more histrionic, less willing to engage in political compromise, and more intolerant not only of homosexuals, feminists, and other Eastern urban excrescences, but even of Christian fundamentalists who do not share their enthusiasms, neoconservative disenchantment will doubtlessly grow.

The Reagan strategy for mollifying various conservative groups — by "buying off" corporate conservatives in the form of tax breaks, reduced regulation, and numerous exceptions to his free trade "principles" and allying with the New Right on social issues — does not include many concessions to neoconservatism. It is likely that neoconservative intellectuals will continue to rationalize even the most bizarre New Right attacks on legitimacy and order, since intellectuals can, of course, rationalize anything; but in this, neoconservatives will increasingly resemble Stalinist liberals and radicals of the 1930s. Just as Stalin had nothing but contempt for his apologists, so presumably will the New Right for its supplicants.

On the rhetorical level, neoconservatives are important to their allies. The neoconservative critique of the welfare state compromised the legitimacy of the liberal tradition and immeasurably aided in the process of dismantling the Great Society, many of whose programs — contrary to often overheated rhetoric — were not failures at all. Conservatives can readily appropriate "principled" neoconservative attacks on government's ability to help the poor into a justification for selfishness; neoconservativism's quest for a moral order can readily become the basis of a demand for that order through legal repression up to and including matters of freedom guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. When the "good" Richard Nixon wanted a Family Assistance Plan, he turned to his then counselor, the omnipresent Daniel Moynihan, and got an ingenious program which combined compassion and the work ethic; when the "bad" Nixon decided the program was *too* compassionate, he lost interest in what would have been a reasonable and "principled" reform of the disastrous welfare system. The Nixonian appropriation of the Moynihan approach was also a classic case of torpedoing a complex and perhaps worthwhile neoconservative initiative. Thus, ironically, the neoconservative attack on liberal professionals and academicians is a projection of the fact that neoconservatives are themselves a power-seeking class cut off from liberal and radical roots, a class which vainly seeks to create some European version of aristocratic order in a nation almost constitutionally incapable of achieving that (as DeTocqueville recognized one hundred and fifty years ago).

Neoconservatives cannot resolve the fundamental dilemma of our time — how to achieve greater economic democracy while reining in democracy's excesses in cultural and social matters. Since liberals and others have failed to resolve that conundrum, perhaps neoconservatives should not be faulted. But neoconservative concern for justice for the poor and compassion for the powerless (which is real though unfocused) have been superseded by an exaggerated derision of liberals and a mindless alliance with conservatives, so its failure to articulate programmatic and specific solutions is significant. The neoconservative instinct is to compromise not with liber-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

als, their natural constituency, but with conservatives, precisely the wrong group, since compromise is not in their political vocabulary. In this time of troubles for both neoconservatives and liberals, they should look to each other for aid and support and should eschew false and politically unrealistic alliances with fanatics.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

The Dinner Party a church supper?

Cancel my sub

Somerville, Mass.

To the Editors: Read your article by Maureen Mullarkey — "The Dinner Party is a church supper." [Apr. 10]. Please cancel my subscription—I shall not renew. BARBARA HARRINGTON

Beyond description

New York, N.Y.

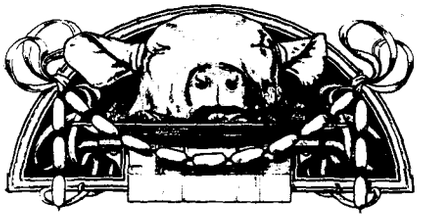
To the Editors: "I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your associations with flowers on my flower and you wrote about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don't."

Georgia O'Keeffe's protest against selective appreciation of her polymorphic work could properly be applied to the review in which it is quoted, Ms. Maureen Mullarkey's review [Apr. 10] of *The Dinner Party*, recently exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum. The party game of commenting on a show one has not seen, which experienced a great increase in popularity during *The Dinner Party's* run, was given no brakes by Ms. Mullarky, whose description of the exhibition itself was meager, and selective along the lines of her strong prejudices.

I am surprised that *Commonweal* would publish such unexamined prejudices as commentary upon an exhibition that is never allowed to speak for itself. Example: In two successive complete sentences, Ms. Mullarkey makes the leap from her first imposed association (*The Dinner Party* and religious jingoism) to encompass the entire feminist art movement *and* "the fundamentalist impulse in American Protestantism."

> The appeal of the *The Dinner Party*, and of the feminist art movement as a whole, lies in its stated desire to dissolve the boundaries between "high" and "low" art. . . . [incomplete sentence] . . . The anti-hierarchical aims of *The Dinner Party*, its folkish desire to pit intellect against feeling and its willingness to play on the susceptibilities of its audience, is a continuation of the fundamentalist impulse in American Protestantism.

The Dinner Party does all of that? Well, perhaps. Is one art exhibition substantial enough to bear the weight of such



vast, synthetic rejection, or should this widely-cast Hofstadterian net be reserved for bigger fish?

The review as a whole presents several troubling questions that find their source in the prejudices of the reviewer:

1. Where is the legitimate boundary between "high" and "low" art, and who has established it? For those of us whose schooling in art history is more elementary than the reviewer's, that boundary has been questioned and crossed repeatedly over the centuries, by the Della Robbias, for example, by William Morris, by Bauhaus, Picasso, the Museum of Modern Art. We may not want to repeat all of those experiments, but we have learned from them.

2. Was the sense of an antagonism between intellect and feeling Ms. Mullarkey's own, or was it shared by others? A stated aim of the exhibition was to bridge that divide. If Ms. Mullarkey found that it failed to do so, could she tell us in what ways it failed? Did the enthusiastic support for the show, which she cites with such evident scorn, come only from the "folkish" sort whom she describes so condescendingly (e.g., "The women who file worshipfully past this cunnilingus-as-communion table . . .")?

Ms Mullarkey protests the "preachiness" of the show, but the preachiness of her own diatribe is readily apparent if one returns to read the *Art in America* review of *The Dinner Party* (Apr. 1980) by Lucy R. Lippard, who proceeds from a full and unbiased description of the show itself to a consideration of some of the important questions raised by such an exhibition at this time:

1. What is or can be the relation between aesthetic and political purposes in art? That question, which has been with us in modern art since the turn of the century, is no less vexing to the American women's movement than it was for the Russian Constructivists of Berlin's Dadaists.

2. What form might the "language" of art take if it were to become gender-inclusive? That question builds on the entire modern history, since Kandinsky's "On the Spiritual in Art" (since Goethe, if you wish), of reaching for a rhetoric of color and form, and expands that history to encompass present efforts to understand and come to terms with the inadvertent gender references embedded in language.

3. Is the creative process necessarily

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

solitary and individualistic? (Is work, further, necessarily alienating?)

Ms. Mullarkey did your readers a disservice, first, in failing to allow *The Dinner Party* to speak for itself; second, in ignoring its claim to be a work of art and thereby failing to appraise it in its own art-historical context.Finally, she failed herself and your readers by giving way to a degree of hyperbolic sarcasm that far exceeded the provocation of one art exhibition in a Brooklyn museum.

NELL GIFFORD

Serving vitriol

Reading, Pa.

To the Editors: Maureen Mullarkey's "The Dinner Party is a church supper" [Apr. 18] is a bunch of malarkey! Namecalling may not be a constructive reply but the pettiness of her piece deserves no better. The identifying note states that Mullarkey writes on art regularly. I hope that space in other issues will not be wasted on such vitriol.

FRANCES J. DOHERTY

Sum of her parts

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: I've been longing for a feminist art critic to tell us that the Emperor has no clothes—and I'm so glad Maureen Mullarkey had the courage, wit, and good sense to write such refreshingly undidactic prose about Judy Chicago's peachy-pretty-evangelical *The Dinner Party* [Apr. 10].

When I saw *The Dinner Party* at the Brooklyn Museum, it was of interest to me that women came *prepared* to love it—the hype, evidently, paid off. (Though not, in every case, exactly as it was meant to: I overheard one woman say, "Isn't it marvelous! So . . . phallic!")

It is sad when an Event is seen as art; and sadder, I think, that unpaid, anonymous women lent themselves to Chicago's enterprise. (Ms. Mullarkey says no one's getting rich on *The Dinner Party*—but *one* person is getting the glory.)

In the unlikely event that I ever achieve fame, I should not like to be represented as a vulva on a dinner plate—any more than I should like to be represented as an appendix in a soup bowl.

(I thought the whole point of the Women's Movement was that a woman was more than the sum of her private parts.)

I'm sure Ms. Mullarkey's criticism will be interpreted, by many, as *anti*-feminist—which will reflect, really, not on her, but on the desire to be trendy that informs people's sensibilities, and on the glibness of programmed reactions.

BARBARA GRIZZUTI HARRISON

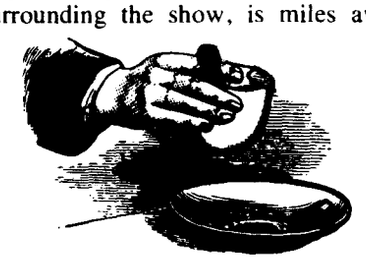
Vaginal ogre

Berkeley, Calif.

To the Editors: Seldom have I read a less insightful, more biased review of an artistic work than the one contained in the April 10 issue by Maureen Mullarkey on Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*. So caught up in a rather obvious obsession-denial syndrome concerning her own sexuality, Mullarkey seems incapable of reading and experiencing Chicago's statement at all accurately.

First, Mullarkey's *reductio ad absurdum* method of dealing with Chicago's vagina symbol is unfair at best, and at worst, reprehensibly dull for a so-called art critic. Chicago claims merely to contribute *one* cultural symbol for women starved for positive symbols of their sexuality in this sick culture. She does not claim that the vagina is the only symbol of womanhood possible, nor does she demand allegiance to the symbol. Thus, to call her art "fundamentalism of the vagina" is to use a faulty metaphor.

Second, Mullarkey clearly does not see that a *woman's* representation of the vagina in a positive visual way, denigrated here obtusely as "pretty" and "vapid" only lines after an entire paragraph on the ponderousness fo the rhetoric surrounding the show, is miles away from a *male* representation of a vagina, as found in *Playboy* or *Penthouse*. The former is a way of women reclaiming for themselves the symbols, strength and beauty of their own sexuality; the latter is sexual domination, rape.



Third, Mullarkey's distaste for the symbol of the vagina is so strong as to lead her into the patently ridiculous equation of the symbol with the person represented. Hence, we do *not* have Emily Dickinson "bottoms-up" but merely Chicago's *symbol* for Dickinson's *womanhood* and *sexuality* on display. Though Mullarkey may disagree with Chicago's conception of Dickinson, Woolf, or O'Keeffe, one would think that an art critic should have a handle on how symbols work.

Fourth, I am disappointed for Mullarkey that she missed the subtle eschewing, nay, put-down of male symbols of power regarding Chicago's treatment of Judith, the phallic sword reduced indeed to a piece of frippery, womanhood exalted at last after centuries of male re-interpretation. Such blindness is somewhat surprising for a woman and an art critic.

Fifth, who cares that three, count them, three men worked on the show? The creation, conception and the huge amount of work behind the exhibition is woman-dominated to the point of sacrifice. Talk about political hair-splitting.

Sixth and last, the deliberate attempt that Mullarkey makes to tie together in function and nature Chicago's production and American huckster revivalism is shown to be grossly misdirected by her own words: "No one is getting rich off *The Dinner Party*."

Mullarkey certainly isn't, in neither artistic awareness nor in cultural breadth. It seems her own inability to reconcile her experience of oppression as a Catholic woman with a desire for freedom from male domination leads her to a fatal flaw in art criticism: not taking the piece on its own terms. I suppose one could overlook the clumsiness of her perception and the fuzziness of her thinking if it were not for this last mistake, but things being as they are, perhaps Mullarkey should concentrate less on art and more on American religious history, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

field in which she manifestly wants to show her expertise.

However, the final blow to this misbegotten review will be my signature. Less of this sort of crabby nonsense, and more good art thinking please.

ROBERT H. HOPCKE

Anatomy lesson

Bridgewater, Ct.

To the Editors: Though I've never met or spoken to Maureen Mullarkey, I'm a great fan of hers. I think her piece on the Judy Chicago anatomy lesson (or labial display) [Apr. 10] was terrific, hands down the best thing I've seen on it. And I speak not as a gloating *man*, but as a cradle feminist reared by a mother who was a disciple of Red Emma.

SAUL MALOFF

The author replies:

I am left to guess whether or not Nell Gifford and Robert Hopke actually attended *The Dinner Party*. Neither one is able to draw on a single independent reference to the work which might indicate that they are in command of their complaints. Instead of providing evidence of their own to support a counter-judgment, they settle for narrowing their eyes at my responses and casting about for issues that don't apply. Both permit indignation to loosen their grip on the issues that do apply.

This leads me to two conclusions: one, neither of them saw the show firsthand (or if, by chance, they did, it was with the same selective inattention they brought to my review); two, their accusations of bias on my part are a smokescreen to cover their irritation at having had *their* prejudices challenged. Neither of them pays as much attention to what was said as to what each prefers to *think* was said in order to maintain their own postures.

Gifford begins by suggesting that perhaps Chicago is not such a big fish after all. Then she whirls around and drops Chicago into a kettle steaming with Big Catch from Picasso to Bauhaus. Goethe, even. From this about-face I can only deduce that she knows quite well that *The Dinner Party* is something more than "one art exhibition in a Brooklyn museum."

The nature of Gifford's bias is evident in her reference to feminist critic Lucy Lippard's sycophancy ("Dazzled, I couldn't take it all in!") as an unbiased review. Feminist criticism is, too often, a variety of special pleading that attempts to make canonically prescriptive a particular way of seeing. The objective of Lippard's criticism runs parallel to what she states as Chicago's aim: "to make feminist culture not a subculture, but one of the streams in the mainstream."

There is a market for this kind of soup. John Richardson's description of *The Dinner Party* in the *New York Review of Books* as so much Tupperware was wonderfully apt on various levels. That *The Dinner Party* has been hailed by feminist academics is enough to warrant sour thoughts about the intellectual honesty and acumen of feminist criticism and its adherents.

My article was not concerned with definitions or boundaries between "high" and "low" art and the quotation marks were used for a reason. I simply pointed to the feminist art movement's *own* expressed interest in these terms as a way of placing Chicago in context.

Gifford's anxiety lest she be counted among the folk results in name-dropping that is off the mark. The names of Della Robbia and company are linked by their association with ceramics and/or the modern crafts movement. The implication here is that I've turned up my nose at Chicago because she has her hands in clay.

Not so. Chicago's medium was never faulted. Neither was the execution of the work. Neither, for that matter, was the iconography (are you listening, Hopke?). What *was* taken to task was the shaping sensibility, the quality of mind expressed in the project as a whole.

That is an aesthetic judgment against which neither Gifford nor Hopke offer anything in contradiction.

I did not ignore *The Dinner Party*'s claim to be a work of art. I argued that it is debased art, silly art, and that the claims made for it—esthetic, political, moral, historical—were sadly inflated.

I acknowledged the technical expertise

("high craftsmanship") without expending undue attention on it. To have done so would have resulted in a diversionary tour de force. The formal aspects of Chicago's art, examined in the light of their substance — which is, after all, what the art is about—turn out to be, in Kandinsky's phrase, "a vain squandering of artistic powers."

Instead of trying to turn chapter headings from Kandinsky into statements of her own, Gifford would do better to simply apply his key observation to *The Dinner Party* and its promotional material:

> Connoisseurs admire the "skill" (as one admires a tightrope walker), enjoy the "quality of painting" (as one enjoys a pastry). But hungry souls go hungry away.
>
> The vulgar herd stroll through the rooms and pronounce the pictures "nice" or "splendid." Those who could speak have said nothing, those who could hear have heard nothing.

Neither Gifford nor Hopke offers any material that might oppose my original contention that the dexterity and visual glamour of *The Dinner Party* merit less interest than the phenomenon of its popularity.

What makes Chicago just the right fish for my Hofstadterian net (as opposed to, say, a Vasarian or Berensonian net) are the implications lurking in the allegiance *The Dinner Party* generates. Those implications can be drawn quite candidly without unwieldy musings on the status of crafts, the right relation between art and society, the nature of creativity or the alienation of work.

Gifford's bent for mystification keeps getting in the way of good argument. Inadvertent gender references? Gender inclusivity? Why all this? The existing language, flawed and fallen as it always has been, has a wealth of ordinary nonsexist (even gender inclusive, if you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think about it) words—e.g., mass media, manipulation, suggestibility, self-deception, pudenda, make-believe, trendiness—that are more to the point in talking about Chicago than hazy references to Germanic authorities.

Robert Hopke clearly considers his own letter a hot tomato—witness that flourish for a signature! What the man doesn't realize is that he is firing away with an unloaded gun.

Hopke concentrates on the sexual aspect of the imagery to the exclusion of its other aspects; yet this was not the crux of my major objection. While I rejected Chicago's misemphasis on female sexuality, as if it were the dayspring of non-genital achievement, I did not dismiss the sexual content of the work *because* it was sexual. I dismissed it because it was simpering, banal and, no, not all that different from misogynistic male representations. ("Genitalia are as amenable to artistic intepretation as a hand or a clavicle. The problem here is its inane solemnity.")

The character of Hopke's complaint—opening with reference to my sexuality and closing with comment on my presumed background—leaves me thinking here is a man sorely threatened by impiety as well as by the sexual content of *The Dinner Party*. A threatened male is just the kind I would expect to find toadying obediently to the (Dinner) Party line! Could it be that Hopke is afraid of being thought a prig or

a chauvinist or a philistine if he refuses to swallow whole everything put to boil in the feminist pot?

At the risk of seeming to hint darkly, I must note that Hopke finds phallic symbols where there are none and misses the ones that are there.

The emblem of earthly (male, if you like) power in depictions of the Judith story is the head of Holofernes. Sometimes it rests vulnerable and unsuspecting on a pillow; sometimes it dangles by the hair from Judith's fist; sometimes, as in Botticelli's interpretation, it lies on a plate like a ham—an incomparable image of impotence, of power brought low.

Judith's knife reads better as a symbol of justice and vengeance, of those powers of transcendence that derive from no man—just the object for Chicago to have made much of. Besides, no matter the supposed intention behind Chicago's thumb-sized knife, the *effect*—and art is nothing if not rigged for effect—is to trivialize and make laughable the act that it represents.

Trying to graft old myths onto the structure of modern metaphors is sticky business. So is the sentimentalizing of a labor stratagem that utilizes piecework and a pool of female labor in much the same way that manufacturers of clothing and micro-electric components utilize unskilled women.

The Dinner Party is woman-dominated to the point of sacrifice? The same could have been said of John Wanamaker's career. Are we to believe that entrepreneuring in the arts is less exploitative than in merchandising because Art is more spiritual than Commerce?

Hopke insists on ignoring the distinction between a transient body of volunteer labor and a fixed core of salaried expertise. Out of the hundreds who worked on *The Dinner Party* at their own expense, there were only four paid linch-pins, three of whom were men. It's curious that a project purporting to celebrate the abilities of women couldn't find a live female potter or industrial designer or tapestry expert with sufficient know-how to justify a salary. All it could find were unpaid female workers.

That's not my idea of hair-splitting.

If no one is getting rich on *The Dinner Party* it is because of the gigantic costs of assembling, disassembling, crating, shipping and storing such a mammoth piece. In terms of notoriety, however, Chicago is profiting nicely—while the women who worked on it are still anonymous.

MAUREEN MULLARKEY

Screen

ROOMS AT THE TOP

A DISCONCERTING FAN DANCE

THE CLOSENESS with which *The Fan* parallels events in the real world must give the film's star, Lauren Bacall, the heebie-jeebies. Scriptwriters Priscilla Chapman and John Hartwell have adapted a Bob Randall novel so that it fits Bacall's career. Like Bacall, the film's Sally Ross is a star of stage and screen who lives in a West-Side Manhattan co-op—Bacall is a resident of the famed Dakota—and Sally's apartment is full of Bacall's memorabilia. At one point, for instance, the movie's title character, Douglas (Michael Biehn), complains in a fan letter that Sally's secretary (Maureen Stapleton) keeps sending him the same old photograph of Sally, the one where she's atop the piano being played by Harry Truman. At dinner with her ex-husband (James Garner), Sally announces, "I've decided to do this cockamamie musical next;" and true to Sally's word, Bacall went into *Woman of the Year* on Broadway as soon as *The Fan*'s shooting schedule was completed. (Actually, Bacall has been too true to Sally's word, for "cockamamie" is an apt description of her Tony-award-winning turkey. Like the dance numbers in the movie, those Bacall does in the show consist primarily of her being trundled around the stage by chorus boys like Mae West on her couch.)

The moment at which all these resemblances undoubtedly came too close for Bacall's comfort was the one, shortly after she finished work on *The Fan*, when Mark David Chapman shot and killed Dakota neighbor John Lennon right in the building's entrance. Chapman is somebody made in the image

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

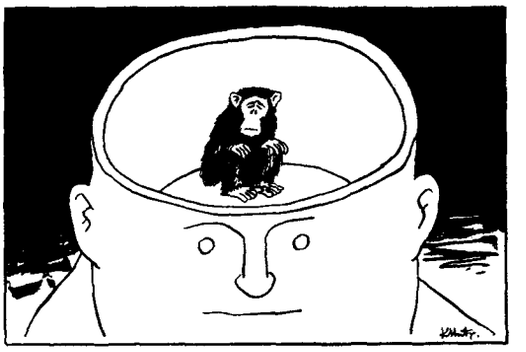
of Sally's fan Douglas, who ends up stalking her with a knife. The scene in which he finally, inevitably, has her alone and at his mercy is where the movie departs from reality, for Sally manages with a little pluck and bravura to turn the tables on her assailant. This twist is a bit of high movie melodrama, pure, marvelous, unabashed hokum of the sort that makes a thriller like this enjoyable and, as a rule, forgettable. Yet on the night I saw the film, this seemed to be the point where *The Fan* hooked up with the audience's feelings most powerfully.

When Douglas at last has Sally cornered, instead of cringing in terror as both he and we might have expected, she defies him. "You're pathetic," she hisses, and the audience gasped and applauded with relief. I'll bet that line was what sold Bacall on the script for the movie. Her weakness as an actress—the same one she has a dancer—has always been that she's too fond of striking poses. (It's the bad effects of early training as a fashion model.) But *The Fan* gives her an opportunity to turn her shortcomings to her advantage. It lets her strike an effective pose with Douglas. When Sally sees that her audacity has given him a second's pause, she keeps talking for the same reason that the snake charmer keeps playing his flute and swaying back and forth.

"I've had enough of this reign of terror!" she declares. "I will not be a victim!" She speaks on behalf not only of herself, but of all the "innocent" people who are sick of "terrorism." It's doubtful whether this kind of rhetoric would work on real psychopaths, who, like Chapman, don't give their victims a chance to speak anyway. Nonetheless, Sally's speech makes a cunning appeal to us when she identifies celebrities like herself with ordinary people, like you and me, who might some day be hostages on an airplane or casualties in a bombing. If a bravura performance can save this actress, the scene implies, maybe our ordinariness will somehow protect us. Although this is all just superstitious reasoning—the two types of "terrorism" aren't the same—it gives us a vested interest in believing that what she says could succeed with Douglas.

Then her jumbled-up speech merges into a larger confusion between fantasy and reality that hovers over the film because of Lennon's murder. The equation Sally makes between her and us blends with the one the movie makes between a fan and an assailant. Douglas in fact ends propped up, dead, in a theater seat, as if he were part of the audience watching the play. This is *The Fan*'s most ghoulish, stylish touch, and in seeing Douglas thus, as a mirror image of ourselves watching the movie, we are drawn into complicity with him. Here is where art blurs into real life. After Chapman shot Lennon, he sat down on the curb outside the Dakota and read J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* while waiting for the police. His attack on Lennon was obviously motivated, at least in part, by desire to escape from the reality of his own life into the pure art of media coverage and notoriety in which he imagined Lennon lived. He mistook Lennon for Sally Ross, someone who lives in a movie, and he thought that by killing Lennon, he could live there too.

As demented as Chapman's act was, even Lennon's most dedicated fan can't help feeling some share of the blame. If



only we had not made Lennon a prominent object of desire, maybe Chapman would not have found him an inviting target. This is the paradox that inheres in all celebrity worship, of course, the fan's feeling that he is somehow killing his favorite star with his love. And this is what *The Fan* offers the public some respite from. In the wake of Lennon's murder—in spite of it—the movie offers reassurance that the celebrities we create can ultimately fend for themselves. This it is that prompted the collective sigh of relief I heard when Sally turns on Douglas. In her self-defense was a release from the incessant anxiety that goes with being a fan, a waiver of the responsibility that the attack on Lennon, or Reagan, would instill in us. *The Fan* is a taut, slick thriller, the sort of film whose pleasure ordinarily lies in its having no significance whatsoever for us. But in this case the movie's timeliness—or, rather, its untimeliness—casts a strange, disconcerting light over the landscape around it. Its current, inevitably brief appearance in the theaters illuminates our culture the way a military flare floating back to earth lights up for an instant the alien terrain below.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

A quarterly review to explore the implications of Christianity for our times

CROSS CURRENTS

"there is no journal that better reveals the creative ferment working at the sub-surface of contemporary Christendom."
— JAMES LUTHER ADAMS
Harvard Divinity School Bulletin

"perhaps the one necessary journal for Catholic intellectuals."
— PHILIP SCHARPER

CROSS CURRENTS
103 Van Houten Fields
West Nyack, N.Y. 10994

Library rate: ☐ $10.00 one year ☐ $27.00 three years
☐ Enter 1 year subscription, $ 8.00 ($ 8.50 foreign)
☐ Enter 3 year subscription, $21.00 ($22.50 foreign)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
☐ Check enclosed ☐ Bill me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RECALLING A NEW FORM OF CRIMINALITY

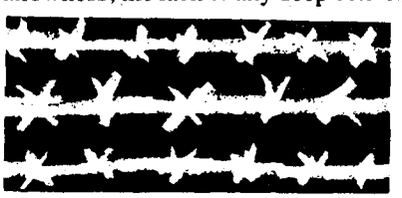
Eichmann twenty years later

JAMES BERNAUER

TWENTY YEARS AGO Jerusalem was once again at the center of of the world's attention. The position was not owed to the city's changing role in the conflicts of international politics but to its timeless status for Jews and for all those who look toward it as the site of ultimate tests. When the trial of Adolf Eichmann opened on April 11, 1961, the extraordinary extent of the media coverage accorded to the event reflected an intensity of expectation for the trial's significance. It was not the possible verdict which stirred this anticipation — Eichmann's guilt was a forgone conclusion — but, rather, the promise of a fundamental enlightenment.

Attention was riveted on that courtroom because a profound silence regarding our age's greatest crime, the Nazi destruction of the European Jews, was about to be challenged. It was a silence of incomprehension which the trials at Nuremberg had not removed. How could the Holocaust be accounted for within the perspective of the crime of aggressive war? Genocide escaped the rationality of political and military policies. For many, the Holocaust had been an unspeakable violence that ought to be mourned but could not be made intelligible. As one witness at Eichmann's trial put it: "To understand Auschwitz would be even worse than not to understand it." The bestial crime which seemed to push barbarity beyond the realm of human comprehension was to be described through the mouth of one of its principal perpetrators. Adolf Eichmann had been in charge of the office in the Nazi security service which was responsible for Jewish affairs and for the "evacuation" of Jews to concentration camps. Most importantly, he was perceived as possessing the type of character capable of causing the Holocaust. He was regarded as a "personification of satanic principles," an arch-fiend with an unquenchable blood-thirst.

Hannah Arendt covered the trial for *The New Yorker* magazine which published her reflections on it in February and March of 1963. Although her *Eichmann in Jerusalem* considers a host of issues that were raised by the crime and trial, her study's major conclusion is conveyed in the subtitle she chose for it: *A Report on the Banality of Evil*. The phrase represents, first of all, her judgment of Eichmann the criminal. While his deeds facilitated the death of millions, he was neither monstrous nor demonic. He was simply thoughtless, unreflective about the meaning of his office and the consequence of his deeds. What distinguished him was an extraordinary shallowness, the lack of any deep convic-



tions, passions, or motivations with the exception of an average man's concern for his career.

Arendt's impression of Eichmann was a common reaction to the trial, including that of a *Commonweal* editorial writer: "Eichmann did not have, we must recognize, a queer or esoteric set of values, some fantastic deranged view of the universe. He seems to have lived, like the rest of us, on clichés and popular pieties: that one must be loyal to one's superiors, that patriotism excuses many excesses, that only a few men are responsible for the crimes of many, that the individual can do very little." (June 15, 1962) The banality of Eichmann's evil is its interdependence with thoughtlessness, the defiance its superficiality poses to any attempt to discover those depths which our literary, philosophical, and theological traditions have encouraged us to believe are there. What profundity is to be found in the Eichmann who said in an interview, as a defense of his role: "Where would we have been if everyone had thought things out in those days?"

The banality of Eichmann's evil posed a critical question for Arendt: "Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it?" Arendt's answer is affirmative. The thinking activity which conditions against evil cannot be identified, however, with the pursuit of knowledge. While the truths at which knowledge arrives may make one intelligent — Eichmann was far from stupid — they do not make one thoughtful.

Thinking is a quest for meanings and, continually interrupting all our normal activities, has no end nor aim outside of itself. It is a paralyzing activity of doubting that, while calling into question all codes of conduct, does not place other propositions or commandments in their place. Thinking's interior dialogue produces no truths but only a conscience, that other, doubting self who lies in wait when one takes stock of his deeds. As Arendt describes it, this activity of thinking is a marginal affair for society except in emergencies. "When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action."

This form of action which,at first glance, seems totally unrelated to politics was lacking in Nazi Germany not only among those who, like Eichmann, had no values but also among those who had values but who, unfortunately, did not

FATHER JAMES BERNAUER, S.J., *is assistant professor of philosophy at Boston College.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think enough. Arendt suggests that there may be a disturbing lesson to be drawn from the almost total moral collapse of respectable society during the Hitler period: Is it possible that, in extreme situations, those who will prove themselves most reliable are not those who proclaim values and adherence to moral norms but the skeptics and the doubters, those who are used to examining things, to probing, to thinking? Unlike those who did nothing on behalf of the good, however, Eichmann's thoughtlessness allowed him to actively participate in crimes for which he deserved the death to which he was sentenced.

EICHMANN'S BANALITY is worth recalling for it may paralyze, if only temporarily, those ways of reflection to which we have become accustomed and which hide a potentially fatal thoughtlessness from each of us. Arendt criticized the justification which the Jerusalem court presented for its guilty verdict because it attempted to view Eichmann through the traditional categories in which crime springs from evil intent. The failure of the court to appreciate the new criminality Eichmann represents reflected the more profound failure of the modern age, of us, to understand the novelty of genocide and the changed human condition which makes it possible. For most, its difference was in degree of seriousness but not in essence. Within this perspective, the Holocaust was the culmination of long centuries of Christian anti-Semitism. Such a view allows us to feel that we are dealing with a familiar reality for which we can repent and seek forgiveness. It is a view nourished by forms of historical reflection which have accustomed us to regard our contemporary situation as the product of a long, evolutionary development about which individuals can do almost nothing. Such reflection dulls our sense of the genuinely exceptional event in history: the operation of a bureaucratic form of governance which allows isolated individuals not to *feel* responsible for participation in programs whose success requires the contribution of vast numbers. These programs are justified in terms of myths such as the struggle of races, classes, or creeds that confer on history the logic of an idea from which events can be deduced.

The final judgment of the Jerusalem court obscured, for Arendt, the fact that Eichmann's participation in genocide was an attack upon human diversity itself. His crime assaulted the very nature of the political realm, which has for its purpose the achievement of freedom and the preservation of pluralism. It is a purpose which is now under attack from many of our fellow citizens. Pluralism is regarded as an insult both by those who would force agreement among us as to ancient philosophic or religious truths and by those who would organize our lives according to the most recent truths of economic and political science. Such desire for truth in political affairs is the accomplice of a bureaucratic system which aims to reduce the range of human responsibility by formulating political questions within a context of truths from which policies only need to be deduced. This appetite for truth is the passion for thoughtlessness.

Eichmann's trial and Arendt's study of

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Development & relief organization seeks experienced representative for El Salvador to manage relief, development & welfare activities of country program. Requires B.A., management & negotiating experience, proficient Spanish. Prefer person well acquainted with Central America.

Send resume to:
Arthur Stegmayer
Catholic Relief Services
1011 First Ave.
N.Y., N.Y. 10022

"Intensely beautiful... haunting." —N.Y. Times Book Review
"An extraordinary achievement...astonishing." —Women's Wear Daily
74 photos. Size 10⅞" x 8½".
NICARAGUA
By SUSAN MEISELAS
Paper $11.95, cloth $22.95, now at your bookstore PANTHEON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it ought to be remembered for they teach a lesson so fundamental that it can be easily overlooked. The fact that systematic mass murder is possible without evil intent and ideological passion, the fact that evil has lost the quality of temptation by which it has been normally recognized — these realities have shattered the framework of our Western tradition's political and judicial categories. Such shattering obliges each of us to think afresh about matters which are now obscured by accepted truths, to make up our own minds, to assume our own individual responsibility, to take our chances.

The style of thinking to which Arendt invites us will not produce a moral code of great theoretical coherence or aesthetic grandeur. We have those. It may not prevent the disasters which are always right around the corner for a society which is committed to imagining the possible necessity of nuclear war. This is no reason to despair of thinking for, as Arendt recognized, such activity "may prevent catastrophes, at least for myself, in the rare moments when the chips are down." Those moments are no longer rare.

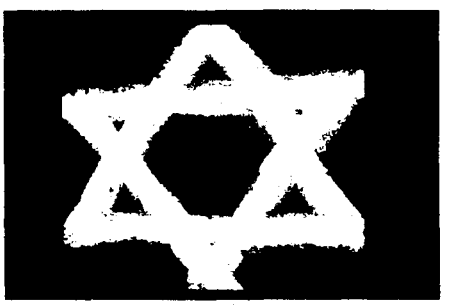
Books: ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

ROBERT LEITER

I KNEW A MAN, an unassuming, self-educated, religious man, who loved art and learning but, because of circumstance, was forced to work at a menial job for most of his life. It was only after he had retired, when he was beyond the petty distractions, that he turned to his true interests, to books and the acquisition of knowledge, and to the one project which he believed would give purpose to his life—a study of the Holocaust. He was convinced that the force of theology—in this case, Christian theology—would crack the code of what he himself called "the worst horror known to man."

He worked diligently for years, keeping to a strict schedule, using all available modes of research. His notes alone filled volumes. Then quite suddenly he stopped, totally defeated by the enormity of the undertaking and by the pervasive sense that an answer was not to be had.

I like to think that all of us, whether we write or read books about the Holocaust, are one with this simple man. We may be a bit more prescient than he; we may know at the start that consistent, systematic answers do not exist to the questions raised by the Holocaust. But what we cannot shake is that the questions persist and that, because we are human, we long for answers. We may know, as Elie



Wiesel has said, that "all questions pertaining to Auschwitz lead to anguish." Still I like to believe that each time we approach the subject, either as readers or writers, we are secretly hoping that this time the riddle will be solved.

The central questions—the how and the why of it all—appear in each of the books surveyed here. There are answers here as well, less abundant than the questions, but by no means less important.

SIDRA DeKoven Ezrahi's *By Words Alone* and Alvin H. Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying* are academic studies of Holocaust literature that approach the subject from differing perspectives but concur on several important points.

Both authors agree that the Nazis succeeded as much through propaganda as through the manipulation of language in the camps. What are we to make of terms like *Sonderkommando, Kapo* and *Appel*, "untranslatable because there is no precedent for them in human experience," terms signifying "not only the functions and the routine of the inmate, but also a new hierarchy of human relations, values and expectations"?

But language also became an instrument of survival for inmates. Often the wish to bear witness was enough to keep people alive. As Elie Wiesel has written, his generation invented "a new literature, that of testimony."

What, then, is the most widely read book about the Holocaust? It is, of course, *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Ezrahi quotes Bruno Bettelheim: "[Anne Frank's] story found wide acclaim because . . . it denies implicitly that Auschwitz ever existed. If all men are good, there never was an Auschwitz." Rosenfeld extends the argument, calling the *Diary* "one of the 'easiest' and most antiseptic works of Holocaust literature." If readers of the *Diary* were to read Ernst Schnabel's *Anne Frank: A Profile in Courage*, "which 'completes' the work by supplying the details of the young girl's ending in Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen" they would "never again be able to rid (their) understanding of the original text of dimensions of terror, degradation and despair that it itself does not contain."

Aside from these moments of concurrence, the Rosenfeld and Ezrahi studies differ greatly. Ezrahi is concerned primarily with creative responses to the Holocaust; and she is unshakable in her belief that there have been great successes in the genre. I find the issue debatable, perhaps unresolvable; and because I feel that the Holocaust will survive the ravages of time and popular entertainment *only* through the supremacy of fact, I have avoided discussing several interesting recent novels (these would in-

ROBERT LEITER *has contributed to* The Nation, Commentary, Film Heritage, *and other journals.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE HOLOCAUST BOOKS discussed in Robert Leiter's review are listed in order mentioned:

By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature by Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, University of Chicago Press, $15, 262 pp.

A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature by Alvin H. Rosenfeld, University of Indiana Press, $17.50, 210 pp.

Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust by Philip Friedman, Edited by Ada June Friedman, The Conference on Jewish Social Studies and the Jewish Publication Society of America, $22.50, 616 pp.

At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities by Jean Amery, Translated by Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld, Indiana University Press, $12.50, 110 pp.

The Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben by Joseph Borkin, Free Press, $10.95, 250 pp.

Less Than Slaves by Benjamin B. Ferencz, Harvard University Press, $15, 249 pp.

Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution by Isaiah Trunk, Stein and Day, $15.95, 371 pp.

Voices from the Holocaust, Edited by Sylvia Rothchild, NAL Books, $14.95, 456 pp.

Witness to the Holocaust by Azriel Eisenberg, The Pilgrim Press, $17.95, 649 pp.

Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945 by Bernard Wasserstein, Institute of Jewish Affairs and Clarendon Press $17.95, 389 pp.

The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's 'Final Solution' by Walter Laqueur, Atlantic-Little, Brown, $12.95, 262 pp.

Avenue of the Righteous: Portraits in Uncommon Courage of Christians and the Jews They Saved from Hitler by Peter Hellman, Atheneum, $11.95, 267 pp.

Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There by Philip P. Hallie, Harper Colophon Paperback, $4.95, 303 pp.

Anus Mundi: 1500 Days in Auschwitz/Birkenau by Wieslaw Kielar, Times Books, $14.95, 312 pp.

The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors by Reeve Robert Brenner, Free Press, $12.95, 266 pp.

The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust by Arthur A. Cohen, Crossroad, $9.95, 110 pp.

clude *Badenheim 1939* by Aharon Appelfeld, *The Missing Years* by Walter Laqueur, *Timetable* by Amos Elon and *The House on Prague Street* by Hana Demetz). I believe that the most successful fictions—Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Ms. Demetz's *House on Prague Street*, to name only two titles—are a species of memoir; so the issue becomes immediately clouded. Even Ms. Ezrahi questions George Steiner's preference for Bruno Bettelheim's *The Informed Heart* over any of the novels or poems born of the concentration camp experience. She finds wanting this need for "systematic explanation."

Mr. Rosenfeld is far more willing to admit to the complexity of the argument. He discusses responses other than the creative and counsels us, as readers, to react to these works with diversity, flexibility. ". . . it is almost certain that we confront the works of survivors in markedly different ways than we do the works of those who perished, just as we assume still another reading stance for writings about the Holocaust by those who were not there."

Faced with works that Mr. Rosenfeld describes as painful and upsetting, disorienting and humbling, what, then, is the ideal critical perspective? George Steiner has argued that these books cannot be "reviewed" in any traditional sense. ". . . the only completely decent review . . . would be to recopy the book, line by line. . . ." Other critics have spoken of the impossibility of approaching the Holocaust except through reverential silence. Reinhard Baumgart, a German critic, insists that writing about the Holocaust "imposes an artificial meaning on mass suffering and, by removing some of the horror, commits a grave injustice against the victims." Rosenfeld understands that these men speak from unassailable positions and that their opinions have great psychological truth. But "the discrepancy between honoring (the) ideal and fulfilling it is a real one and poses critical problems that are not easy to solve."

THE ARGUMENT takes on another dimension when we approach the work of the historian (especially the historian/survivor) who must, by reason of his calling, seek out the authentic. Problems of methodology are central to Philip Friedman's *Roads to Extinction* and Jean Amery's *At the Mind's Limits*. Both authors were survivors (Friedman died in 1960 and Amery took his own life in 1978) and still they came to radically divergent conclusions about the historian's ability to extract truth from horror.

Polish-born Philip Friedman, who has become known as "the father of Holocaust literature," was born an ardent Zionist and, before the outbreak of the second World War, an historian interested in the Jews of Eastern Europe.

With the Nazi occupation of Poland, Friedman went into hiding and spent the war moving from one underground location to another. He rarely spoke of this period of his life, in which his wife and daughter died. After the liberation of Poland, Friedman was appointed director of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Central Historical Commission and began the active research which continued until his death.

Friedman eventually came to the United States, taught at Columbia University and continued his writing and research. The essays in *Roads to Extinction* (edited by his wife, also a survivor) are representative of his interests and range in subject from the early discriminatory techniques used by the Nazis—the insistence that all Jews wear the Yellow Badge, the relocation of the Jews into ghettos, the establishment of the *Judenrats*—to the harsher extermination measures, mass shootings, and scientific experiments. Friedman writes of far more obscure issues than these: there is a piece on the Karaites, who, like the Samaritans, were a schismatic Jewish sect; there is an essay on the extermination of the Gypsies, an Aryan people; and Friedman discusses several of the pseudo-saviors who headed the "supposedly autonomous but in fact German-appointed" Jewish councils.

The emphasis is on the near universal aspect of the Holocaust. Jewish tragedies had in the past been confined to specific areas; the Nazi final solution affected nearly all of Europe. The sheer expanse of documents and eye-witness testimonies, written in scores of languages, had to be mastered before the historian could proceed. *Roads to Extinction* is a testament to Friedman's belief in patience and exactitude.

Jean Amery, on the other hand, was born Hans Mayer in 1912 in Vienna, the only child of a Catholic mother and a Jewish father. He was totally assimilated into Christian society, and it was only after the appearance of the Nuremberg Laws that he began to think of himself as a Jew.

Against the wishes of his mother, Amery married a Jewish woman and fled with her to Belgium. Two years later he was arrested by the Belgians and sent to concentration camps in southern France. He escaped from one of them and returned to Belgium in 1941, worked in the Belgian resistance movement for the next two years, but was arrested again, this time by the Gestapo. Somehow he survived and after the liberation of the camps he became a journalist.

In contrast to Friedman, Amery finds history "useless as a concept" for understanding the Holocaust. If Auschwitz took man to the mind's limits, how then can we expect the mind to comprehend it? All attempts at clarification, especially those that have stressed a single cause, have been failures. Amery does not believe in the theory of a German national character or that "what is contained in the symbolic code words Auschwitz and Treblinka was already in the making in German intellectual history from Luther to Kleist to the 'Conservative Revolution' and finally to Heidegger." Describing Fascism as an excessive form of 'Late Capitalism' is even less permissible; blaming the Versailles treaty, a "childish evasion."

But Amery also admits that nothing really explains such radical evil. It is "singular and irreducible in its total inner logic and its accursed rationality. For this reason all of us are still faced with a dark riddle." Amery refused to believe that he was blessed with clarity during the writing of his book. "Clarification would . . . amount to disposal, settlement of the case, which can then be placed in the files of history."

Amery is speaking here not only of the powerlessness of the mind to comprehend Auschwitz after the event but, even more tragic, of the mind's powerlessness to combat the realities of Auschwitz, its ineffectuality in extreme situations.

Forced to scrounge for food, to fear for his life, the intellectual in the camps found that the things of the mind lost their only abiding quality—their transcendence. "Camp life demanded above all bodily agility and physical courage that necessarily bordered on brutality. The intelligentsia were only seldom blessed with both, and the moral courage that they often tried to employ in place of the physical was not worth a trifle." Prisoners who in everyday life had not been trained to think in any discriminating manner were far better off.

Before being sent to Auschwitz Amery was tortured and much of what he has to say finds its source in this incident, which he has called "the most horrible event a human being can retain within himself." Amery faults Hannah Arendt and her notion of the banality of evil. " [O]rdinary faces finally become Gestapo faces after all . . . and evil overlays and exceeds banality." Arendt was mistaken because she "knew the enemy of mankind only from hearsay, saw him only through the glass cage." "If one insists on it, (my torturers) were bureaucrats. . . . And yet, they were, much, much more. I saw it in their serious, tense faces, which were not swelling, let us say, with sexual-sadistic delight, but concentrated in murderous self-realization. With heart and soul they went about their business, and the name of it was power, domain over spirit and flesh, orgy of unchecked expansion." It was in torture that Amery saw the Third Reich embodied in "all the density of its being."

He acknowledges that much has been written about the victims of torture and their loss of human dignity, a judgment he finds "ethical and pathetic." What is lost in torture, Amery contends, is trust in the world. "At the first blow . . . this trust . . . breaks down. The other person, *opposite* whom I can exist only as long as he does not touch my skin surface as border, forces his own corporeality on me with the first blow. He is on me and thereby destroys me."

Knowing that language is incapable of communicating the *how* of pain, Amery likens torture to "those life experiences that in a milder form present themselves also to the consciousness of the patient who is awaiting help, and the popular saying according to which we feel well as long as we do not feel our body does indeed express an undeniable truth. But only in torture does the transformation of the person into flesh become complete."

With the works of Amery and Fried-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man, the polarities are charted. But are these authors in opposition? They do not seem to be compatible, but they are far from mutually exclusive. Amery's anti-theoretical theory may be the logical extension of Friedman's objectivity. If we know that German scientists broke and re-broke the bones of Jewish children in order to test the healing process, does this mean we "understand" anything at all? There was a logic to Nazism, but not the logic we have been taught to honor.

In the face of such madness and cruelty, we need Friedman's objectivity as much as we need Amery's correction. Friedman would agree, I think. His "Outline of a Program for Holocaust Research" is included in *Roads to Extinction* as an appendix. It covers several pages of text. Reading it, one soon realizes that Friedman, after years of work, had barely completed a third of the schedule he had set for himself. The demands were exacting, but the "Program" seems to say, "No matter how much I accomplish, the issue will never be concluded, never filed away." And I imagine that Friedman conceived of his great and substantial research as only the smallest step taken in the direction of comprehension.

THE CRIME AND PUNISHMENT OF I. G. FARBEN by Joseph Borkin and *Less Than Slaves* by Benjamin B. Ferencz are works solidly in the Friedman tradition and together they reconstruct for us the very blueprint of hell.

I. G. Farben, Germany's massive chemical combine, has had a long and infamous history. While Farben scientists discovered and mass produced aspirin and sulfa drugs, they also introduced poison gas to trench warfare.

Farben's has been a triumph of wealth and privilege. After World War I, the French had hoped to dismantle the Farben industries, certain this would insure the safety of their nation and alternately cripple any plans for German rearmament. But high-placed American friends of Farben would not allow it. During the 1920s. I.G. formed a partnership with Standard Oil. Germany had a fair supply of raw and synthetic materials; they lacked only the tetraethyl additive for

gasoline. Standard Oil, with the help of General Motors, supplied I. G. with the process, doing so with the full approval of the United States War Department and at a time when Hitler's intentions were clear.

Farben was Hitler's complete partner. As each country fell to the Nazis, I. G. would "acquire" the appropriate companies. And once Auschwitz was constructed, I. G. built a factory there that literally worked the inmates to death. "Starvation was a permanent guest at Auschwitz. The diet fed to I. G. inmates, which included the famous 'Buna soup'—a nutritional aid not available to other prisoners—resulted in an average weight loss for each individual of about six and a half to nine pounds a week. At the end of a month, the change in the prisoner's appearance was marked; at the end of the two months, the inmates were not recognizable except as caricatures formed of skin, bones, and practically no flesh; after three months, they were either dead or so unfit for work that they were marked for release to the gas chambers at Birkenau. Two physicians who studied the effect of the I. G. diet on the inmates noticed that the "normally nourished prisoner at Buna could make up the deficiency by his own body for a period of three months. . . . The prisoners were condemned to burn up their own body weight while working and, providing no infections occurred, finally died of exhaustion."

This is a quote from Mr. Borkin's book but it describes the fate that has befallen the two disbelieving, haunted-looking men pictured on the cover of *Less Than Slaves*. Mr. Ferencz's special concern, which has occupied thirty-five years of his professional life, has been compensation for the victims of the German slave labor industry.

Of the firms that used concentration camp inmates—Farben, Krupp, AEB, Telefunken, Siemens, BMW and Rheinmetall, to name only the most familiar companies—the number that paid any money to survivors was minimal. Fewer than 15,000 Jews received any of the less than $13 million paid. Severe hardship cases got no more than $17,000 apiece. Krupp and Siemens offered only $825, AEG/Telefunken no more than $500, and Rheinmetall even less than that. During the proceedings against Farben, survivors had to listen while a witness from I. G. Farben corporation characterized Auschwitz as a convalescent home. Farben paid the equivalent of 5,000 marks. The claimants had asked for 7,000 and this was only half of what they had originally hoped to receive. Farben considered the payment "a gesture of goodwill" rather than "the discharge of an obligation." And no one can be certain that Farben and the others would have paid anything if they had not been faced with a mass of incriminating evidence and the possibility of court action and unfavorable publicity.

What became of the directors of these companies? John McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner, wanted to begin a new relationship with Germany; and so in 1951, through a general act of clemency, he released all of the German industrialists then incarcerated. These men showed no remorse, defending their decisions as necessary in a time of war. Of the I. G. executives, only one, Fritz ter Meer, had been convicted of murder, slavery, plunder, and spoliation. For his crimes he was, by 1956, the elected chairman of the supervisory board of Bayer, one of the largest of the I. G. companies.

Only one industrialist, Friedrich Flick, refused to pay any money. At the Nuremberg trials, it was Flick who said, "Nothing will convince us that we are war criminals." Flick died in 1972 at the age of 90, never having paid a Jew a cent but leaving one billion dollars to his playboy son.

And what of the laborers who would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not accept compensation? Mr. Ferencz quotes from the letter of a pious Jew who, because of the injuries he had suffered, was in need of money but could not bring himself to accept it from the Germans. This man's family had totaled fifty-six individuals but within twelve hours of their arrival at Auschwitz all of the women and small children had been gassed. "The twenty-five who were kept alive were sent to work for I. G. Farben at Buna. [This man] saw his two brothers beaten to death with a shovel by a German foreman and the others were tortured or worked to death. He was ruptured carrying the heavy bags of cement and beaten until his ribs were broken. The gold crowns were torn from his mouth and when he begged to be shot he was told by the foreman that it was not for him to decide when to 'croak' but he would give up his mongrel soul when it suited the Germans. Of all of his fifty-six relatives, he alone survived—'a miracle of God'."

And all for what? By any standards, I. G. Auschwitz was a dismal failure. "Despite the investment of almost 900 million Reichsmarks, and thousands of lives, only a modest stream of fuel and not a single pound of Buna rubber was ever produced."

At the end of World War II the Allies left Farben intact, and it thrives today. One of its successor companies, General Analine and Film (GAF) was kept alive and productive by the intercession of President Kennedy's brother-in-law, Prince Radziwill.

DID THE JEWS go to their deaths like sheep? Perhaps this is *the* central question of the Holocaust, because if the answer is no, then all of the West is implicated in the destruction of the European Jews. It is a complex issue. Isaiah Trunk's *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, Sylvia Rothchild's *Voices from the Holocaust* and Azriel Eisenberg's *Witness to the Holocaust* are three books which force us to re-think our opinions of Jewish behavior during the Nazi terror. (The Rothchild book divided the numerous eye-witness accounts into three sections: Before, During and After the Holocaust. The structuring is helpful and illuminating. The Eisenberg book is a truly monumental piece of scholarship, as indispensable as Philip Friedman's work.)

Many answers have been given to the question. When Alexander Donat was asked why the Jews acted as they did, he said: "We fell victim to our faith in mankind, our belief that humanity had set limits to the degradation and persecution of one's fellow men."

Philip Friedman stressed that "All along the Nazis nurtured in their victims the delusion that these were but temporary measures necessitated by the war, and that by meekly complying with the demands of the authorities, they would be 'let alone'."

Kiddush Hashem, or martyrdom for the faith, however, is an integral part of Judaism. Ezrahi reminds us of what many historians and novelists, to say nothing of the general public, have forgotten—"that for nearly two thousand years it was not the Maccabean warriors, Mattathias and his sons, but the Maccabean martyrs, Hanna and her seven sons, who were exalted in Jewish as well as Christian literature."

Religious Jews often "looked upon their final road in terms of historical martyrdom," Trunk writes. "We know of a Rabbi in Kelme, Lithuania, who walked at the head of the Jewish community as they went to the execution point. He asked the SS man for permission to say a few words to the gathered Jews and, obtaining this permission, he encouraged them, saying they had the rare opportunity of fulfilling the commandment of martyrdom for the faith. The SS man interrupted him for taking too long. The rabbi said to him, 'I'm done. Now you can do your job'." But why is it that the Jews have had to bear the burden of dying like sheep? Bruno Bettelheim, in his essay "Surviving," points out that there was an almost "total absence of fighting back among the millions who went through the Russian camps . . ." But the Jews knew the consequences of resistance. "Of the 853 prisoners who conspired to blow up one of the four crematoria in Auschwitz," Bettelheim writes, "not a single one survived. Some died in the blast; all others were im-

mediately shot down. Whatever little open resistance there was in the camp, it led to survival only when the Allied armies had already reached the immediate vicinity; otherwise, the result was always death." And Mr. Trunk adds: "Why isn't there one recorded instance of armed insurrection by Gentile inmates of a concentration camp, when the conditions for such were more favorable than for the Jews, who rose many times?"

Whether or not one accepts the basic premise of Terrence des Pres's book *The Survivor*—that for concentration camp inmates survival was the *only* thing—the author makes two important points. As he says, there was nothing accidental about conditions in the camps; "they were determined by a deliberate policy which aimed at complete humiliation and debasement of prisoners. . . ." In this way the Germans intensified "the already heightened irritability of prisoners toward each other, and thus . . . stifled in common loathing the impulse towards solidarity."

It is easy to say that the Jews went to their deaths like sheep, des Pres notes. "Thereby our own fear finds expression, our own terror and doubt to be concealed even as we imply that we know better than they what it must be like to wake up in a concentration camp, to carry on through nightmare, to turn back somehow to that world. Whatever our reasons, we can make such assumptions only by disregarding a cardinal fact about the survivor's experience: *all things human take time*, time which the damned never have, time for life to repair at least the worst of its wounds. It took time to wake, time for horror to incite revolt, time necessary to carry through a major resistance action in a concentration camp . . . Any accumulation of too much bad luck at once—to be exhausted and starving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and *then* get sick and *then* be savagely beaten—and the frail spirit broke."

How were the Jews, who had never been known for their militance, expected to engage in battle and defeat an army that had conquered nearly all of Europe? It is a bit much to ask of even great numbers of people.

What Mr. Trunk's book makes clear is the extent and variety of Jewish resistance. The Nazi terror was such an anomaly in Jewish history—so widespread, methodical, and relentless—that the resistance was correspondingly unique. Partisan fighting, escapes from the camps, uprisings in the ghettos—these were only the most obvious manifestations. For Trunk and for Friedman, *any* infringement of Nazi rule—praying when it was outlawed, the smuggling of food into the ghettos, even the wearing of the yellow star—constituted resistance.

As the extermination began, resistance changed its shape. During the selections for the gas chambers, "husbands often broke ranks and ran to their families in the first group, despite the fate in store for them if they did so. Families tried to stick together at any price. Special concern was given to the children, and people tried to ease their final minutes."

Trunk quotes from the autobiography of Rudolph Hoess, the *Kommandant* of Auschwitz. ". . . he tells of a young woman who drew his attention because she kept running back and forth, helping small children and elderly women undress and keep calm. Her own two children had already been taken. As she stood at the gas chambers, she called out to him: 'I knew all the time that we were being taken to Auschwitz to be gassed, and I deliberately avoided being chosen for labor because I wanted to take care of my children and go through all this in the full awareness of what was happening. I hope it won't take long.'"

Trunk believes that the postcards and letters of Jews soon to be "relocated" give us a clear picture of the spiritual and psychological mood of the people. The letters are preserved in the Ringelblum Archives and were written by all sorts of people, young and old, male and female, people differing in their religious, social, political beliefs. They "record resignation and desperate calls for help, faith in divine providence and utter atheism, apathy and feverish efforts to find some kind of rescue, natural optimism and unlimited despair, a clear sense of what was in store and completely unfounded illusions. The letters tell us how diversely different people reacted to the same events." This is what the Jews were, not cowards, not heroes and not really martyrs, just a diverse group of people responding in diverse ways to the same event.

Trunk offers one other possible explanation for why the Jews acted as they did. He conceives of it as a moral and psychological element, "a possible refusal to show the murderers any panic or hysteria that might have given additional pleasure to the sadists among them. The victims preferred dying with dignity and with scorn toward the killers. The Jews might also have actually wondered whether it was worth fighting for one's life in a world where the human beast could rule undisturbed amid the passive silence of the entire civilized world." Mr. Trunk implores any reader who finds his argument unconvincing to simply read his book.

BRITAIN and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945 by Bernard Wasserstein is a portrait of the world's passive silence. Here we have portrayed Britain, a nation founded on the principles of civility, discounting the pleas of a truly despairing people.

British policy on the Jewish question had much to do with the status of Palestine. Under the basically pro-Zionist Balfour Declaration of 1917, Britain was to oversee the governing of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish homeland. But with the Nazi domination of Europe the British adopted the White Paper Policy of 1939, which amounted to a total reversal of the Balfour Declaration. Palestine would not become a Jewish state. Partition was dismissed. Arabs and Jews were to share authority; and the British would permit further expansion of a Jewish National Home by immigration *only* if the Arabs agreed to the pro-

People Ideology
People Theology

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS DOGMA

Dario Lisiero

A challenging analysis of Pope John Paul II's trend toward conservatism in response to liberation theology and other progressive ecclesiastical movements. Exploring the role of ideology in faith and history, Fr. Lisiero calls for the Church to shed her hierarchical, functionalist system in favor of an anti-dogmatic, evangelical praxis of change—a "Christianity of liberation" inspired and permeated by the Gospel example of Christ. Bibliography.

ISBN: 0-682-49664-2 $10.95

Complete and Mail Today

EXPOSITION PRESS, INC., Dept. CM
325 Kings Highway, P.O. Box 2120
Smithtown, N.Y. 11787
(516) 582-6655

Please send me ..... copies of PEOPLE IDEOLOGY—PEOPLE THEOLOGY by Fr. Lisiero @ $10.95 plus $1.50 postage and handling per copy. In N.Y. State add tax. (Major credit card orders accepted by phone or mail if $15 or more.)
Total Enclosed $_____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

posals. The Jewish population would be allowed to increase until it equaled one-third of the total population of the country. This was to be achieved over a five-year period and only if the economic capacity of the country permitted it.

Ships attempted to bring illegal immigrants to Palestine. The most infamous incident involved the yacht *Struma*, which left Constanza in December of 1941 carrying 769 refugees. It arrived in Istanbul after three days, its engine broken down. Two months later the ship was towed out to sea by the Turks. It sank under mysterious circumstances and only one refugee survived.

By 1943 enough evidence had accumulated for the British and Americans to set up a conference on the Jewish question. The meeting was held in Bermuda in April of 1943, ". . . but after 'ten agreeable days of discussion,'" as the British report stated, nothing had been accomplished.

And the Allies were unwilling to send food to the people in the ghettos and the concentration camps, conceiving of this as a breach of the blockade against the Axis powers. Still they supplied the entire food needs of the population of Greece, an Axis-occupied country from 1942 until the end of the war. Twenty-five thousand tons of food went to Greece while the Red Cross was allowed to send only a total of 4,500 tons of food to the inmates of concentration camps during the same time period.

Mr. Wasserstein, like Mr. Borkin and Mr. Ferencz, discusses the proposed bombing of Auschwitz, concluding that the Allies knew about Auschwitz, knew of its purpose and knew what was being done to the inmates there; but official policy was that bombing the site or the railroad tracks leading to it would be an unnecessary diversion of planes from the overall war effort. The Nazis were to be defeated; once that was accomplished, all other problems would be solved.

With uncharacteristic temerity, Mr. Wasserstein offers several theories on why the world withheld its support. British officials seemed able to absorb information about the Holocaust, but they could not grasp nor believe the enormity of the situation. They may have been influenced in their decisions by their distance from the events. Distance insures that the consequences of decisions will have no direct personal effect upon the actor. And distance "need not be physical; it may be psychological. The average British official lived in a different mental world from that of the Jewish refugee."

Mr. Wasserstein's book is tragic proof that "The sombre fear recorded in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 had proved to be grimly prophetic: 'There are pessimists who are afraid that the English will finally arrive, declaring, "We have conquered!"—to our graves.'" (Walter Laqueur, in his recent *The Terrible Secret*, corroborates and extends the argument of the Wasserstein book, adding much to the portrait of the Allies' indifference.)

Peter Hellman's *Avenue of the Righteous* and Philip Hallie's *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* tell of people who, aware of the consequences, effected change.

The title of Mr. Hellman's book refers to that section of Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust Memorial, devoted to the Righteous Christians who saved Jewish lives. "By August 1978 . . . some seven hundred trees had been planted on the Avenue. They represent Christians of at least fourteen nationalities. The largest number are Dutch and the next largest Polish. There are substantial numbers of trees representing French, Belgian, Italian and even German Righteous."

Mr. Hellman writes of four Righteous Christians: Henriette Chaumat, ". . . a singular, highly independent, impeccably stylish and quite beautiful woman," the mistress of a physician in Ghent, who took in a young Jewish boy; Sietske Postma and her family, Dutch Christians, who gave shelter to the young Nuret Hegt; Raoul Laporterie, a French clothier, who, with the aid of forged papers, helped Jews cross the border from occupied France into the Vichy Republic; and Leokadia Jaromerska, a Polish woman, who found a small baby abandoned in the tall grass beside a convent.

The first three stories are rather thinly told, with too much international and personal history breezily summarized. But in the piece on Leokadia, Mr. Hellman tells a powerful story and tells it simply and well. Leokadia's husband, Bolek, was arrested one day in April, 1940 by the Gestapo for possession of an illegal newspaper. Leokadia, alone and frightened, accepts the abandoned child without hesitation, names her Bogusia, and keeps her by her side through all the dislocations of war.

Then the war is over, and Leokadia's husband returns from Auschwitz. But even worse, Bogusia's father, Gershon Jonisz, returns as well. Bogusia's real name is Shifra, and her father wants her back, wants to take her with him to Israel to start a new life.

The story confronts all the difficult questions: Who has the greater claim to the child, the biological parents or those who provide nurture? After so many years, is Leokadia's husband expected to accept Bogusia as his own? And, after the same number of years, is Bogusia expected to love and accept her father unrestrainedly?

This is not simply a story of what Mr. Hellman calls "uncommon courage." It

JOURNEYS IN FAITH

Edited by Robert A. Raines

View the 60s and 70s through the spiritual pilgrimages of some of the most colorful, controversial religious figures of our time. Journeys in Faith—a unique collection to encourage others along the way:

Daniel Berrigan—**TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE LONG HAUL** $9.95
Robert McAfee Brown—**CREATIVE DISLOCATION—THE MOVEMENT OF GRACE** $7.95
Martin E. Marty—**BY WAY OF RESPONSE**
Virginia Ramey Mollenkott—**SPEECH, SILENCE, ACTION** *The Cycle of Faith* $7.95
Mary Luke Tobin—**HOPE IS AN OPEN DOOR** $7.95

Order through your local bookstore or Abingdon

abingdon

201 Eighth Avenue, So., Nashville, TN 37202

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is about essential things, about how people survive the desperate choices they make.

Mr. Hallie's book is a celebration of the village of Le Chambon in France and "how goodness happened there." The book is marred by an occasional hectoring tone and the author's insistence on making ethical proclamations, which not even the villagers of Le Chambon can tolerate. Mr. Hallie is saved, however, by the fascination of the story he tells.

André Trocme was the pastor of the Protestant village of Le Chambon, and he and his wife, Magda, and their children as well as Daniel Trocme, Edouard Theis and Roger Darcissac helped thousands of Jews escape into Switzerland. The success of the plan depended upon a tight network of Le Chambon houses where the Jews were sheltered until it was safe to transport them out of France.

Both books ask an important question: Why is it that one person can say naturally "Come in," and another cannot. Abram Lipski who asked Henriette Chaumat to hide her son explains: "People saw us being hunted, and in their human hearts they had a first movement toward compassion. But then, after a day or two, it was pushed aside by a more powerful movement. They were afraid."

Neither book explains why people said yes. But one thing is clear: goodness is as much a riddle as evil. And often it is easier to write about evil than about good. Hellman and Hallie trace the problem to their subjects. As Mr. Hellman says, the righteous are not known for their self-publicizing. And when Mr. Hallie tried to speak of ethics and goodness to the people of Le Chambon, they would have none of it. "Magda Trocme was not the only citizen of Le Chambon who scoffed at words that express moral praise. In almost every interview I had with a Chambonnais or Chambonnaise there came a moment when he or she pulled back from me but looked firmly into my eyes and said, 'How can you call us "good"? We were doing what had to be done. Who else could help them? And what has all this to do with goodness? Things had to be done, that's all, and we happened to be there to do them. You must understand that it was the most natural thing in the world to help these people."

The lives portrayed in these books resist theory. The people are self-effacing and make of their bravery something simple. But in light of this we can only ask why so few others joined the cause.

WITHOUT HELP the Jews had only two alternatives: immediate death or the slow death of the camps. And how were they expected to survive there, in Auschwitz, Treblinka, Bergen Belsen and Sobibor? As Terrence des Pres has written, "The survivor's will to go on is illogical, irrational, stupid with another wisdom. Just to *read* descriptions of camp conditions leads to loss of faith in the prospect of survival. Life seems so clearly impossible against such odds."

Anus Mundi, the work of Wieslaw Kielar, a Polish Christian, gives the clearest picture to date of how Auschwitz/Birkenau functioned and how inmates managed to live there. The publisher claims uniqueness for the book, and rightly so. Kielar spent 1500 days in the camp; he arrived at the very beginning and survived to see the liberation.

But the work is unique for other reasons. It is far different from Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* and Bruno Bettelheim's *The Informed Heart*. Both authors, as psychiatrists, attempted to prove theories about individual behavior. Bettelheim depended upon his ability to observe situations, to examine them critically. And Frankl speaks often of having cultivated an inner life as a defense against the absurdity of the camps.

I am not suggesting that Mr. Kielar did not at some time depend upon such powers; but his work is notable for its independence of theory. Mr. Kielar wants to prove nothing and is often no more than a camera eye, witnessing and recording. He tells us little about himself or his family, or about his life before his imprisonment. And he offers us no solace. His book begins at the gates of Auschwitz. There is no outside world.

"Anus Mundi" was the name the Germans gave to Auschwitz; and, as Richard Rubenstein has written in his book *After Auschwitz*, it is typical of the anality of the camp. "Rudolph Hoess . . . was one of the many Nazis to note and complain of the hideous fecal stench of the camp. The camp literally smelled of human decay. The SS wallowed in human stench to destroy what they regarded as the ultimate evil. As had so frequently occurred before, those who saw themselves as overwhelming a radical evil felt compelled to fight evil with evil. The Devil could be fought only with the Devil's weapons."

Survival was a precarious thing. As Terrence des Pres writes, "The SS could kill anyone they happened to run into. Criminal *Kapos* would walk about in groups of two or three, making bets among themselves who could kill a prisoner with a single blow."

Kielar tells of a massively built Jewish man, who, because of his strength, had every chance to survive. But the Kapos got to him. They worked him for three straight days, beating him through it all. "There was the dull thud of blows and the heartrending groans of the tortured man. The Jew dropped on his knees and doubled up in order to protect his head. However, in doing so, he unintentionally exposed his back to the blows. The Kapos knew where they must aim—the kidneys. They were experts. Once more the tortured man rose; he gave one tre-

PUT YOUR BELIEFS INTO ACTION:...

OPEN Invest in Open Housing

Help fight racial segregation. Invest in a non-profit fund which finances affordable mortgages for minorities and whites making housing moves that foster racially diverse neighborhoods.

For facts, clip and mail to: CW 2

Morris Milgram
Fund for an OPEN Society
1901 East-West Highway, T-2
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Zip: _____

This is not an offer to sell these securities. The offering is made only by the Investment Description– available only in states where these securities may be offered.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mendous scream which stopped the Kapos in their tracks and then keeled over. It was the end. Suddenly one of the Kapos bent over him.

'Would you believe it, he's still alive,' he said . . .

'What?' the Lagerfuhrer screamed, positively foaming with rage. That was enough. The Kapo laid a stick across the powerful neck of the dying man; then he rocked on it for awhile until something cracked. This time there was no doubt that it was the end."

Gaining access to that section of the crematorium where the autopsies were performed, Kielar sees a glass jar containing the swollen and blackened liver of the huge Jew. This man had been one of the wealthiest of Czech industrialists, and "In the last analysis he had been murdered because the SS doctor had earmarked his body for research while the Jew was still alive. He wanted to know what the liver of such a giant would look like after three days of constant beatings."

There are other moments of dread horror. Kielar watches as a drunken Blockfuhrer tries to remove a wedding ring from the hand of a corpse. Unable to loosen it, the man takes a shovel and "with one blow he chopped all the fingers off the blue hand. The wedding ring rolled along the floor. With a coarse laugh he picked it up . . . not without first having kicked the hacked-off stumps in the direction of the heap of corpses. These mutilated fingers made a far more harrowing impression on me than dozens of dead bodies loaded on platforms."

Victor Frankl has several heartbreaking pages on what it was like to wake each morning in a concentration camp. But Kielar, in his description of the standing cell he was forced to endure, gives us a far more visceral sense of how slowly time moves for people who are in pain.

Most shocking and revelatory are the early sections of the book. Here we see an Auschwitz before the advent of systematic death, a recreation sight for sadistic Kapos.

If, following the reasoning of Ezrahi and Rosenfeld, Anne Frank's diary has been popular because it was "antiseptic," then *Anus Mundi* may go down in history as the most important neglected work of the twentieth century.

THE UNKNOWN DIARIST of the Lodz Ghetto, who did not survive the war, asked an important question: "Is it possible to come out of such unimaginable depths, of such unfathomable abysses?" For too many, the answer was no, in both a physical and spiritual sense. But Reeve Robert Brenner's book, *The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors*, answers the question in any number of ways, many of them disturbing, others surprising and heartening.

The bitterness of many Jews, their belief that Jewish ritual can affect no change, is easily understood. One man lost his faith over a cake of soap. "After liberation when the struggle to regain our health became the single most important task, bars of soap were at a premium. We needed them to keep clean and fight infection and pychologically to scrub away the stench of death all around us. . . . Well, one day a storage bin of soap was discovered, which had been previously overlooked. We were all happy and excited about it. But somehow the orthodox rabbis heard about this bin of soap and decided the contents were not kosher enough for Jews and prevented us from gaining access to it. We were deprived of decent soap for so long by the Nazis and we were further deprived of it by the rabbis."

Far more unusual are the survivors whose faith was unblemished or even strengthened by their experiences in the camps. Most of these people separate God from man; man has choice and can "help enthrone God or the Devil." One survivor believes that the Holocaust provides concrete proof of God's existence, a sign that the Jews are unique and the rest of mankind is made up of savages. (Of course, the opposing view is also expressed, that the camps came into being to prove the existence of God once and for all, to bring him out into the open at last. "And God failed the test. . . .") Another survivor observes the *mitzvot* (or commandments) as her personal revenge against the Nazis. If she did not, she believes the Nazi triumph would be complete.

Asked what they thought the meaning of the Holocaust might be, several survivors attribute to God Zionist impulses, the need to uproot the Jews by whatever means and return them to Israel. One man believes that God's plan was to destroy Hitler and "to accomplish (this) He offered His people, we Jews, as his sacrifice. God's plan was a kind of bargain: I'll permit the Jews to be killed, slow down Hitler's war machine and defeat him by means of his Jewish obsession . . ." The reward was Israel.

Some answers are far-reaching in their implications. "How is it when a man murders another man you never hear that God is at fault?. . . . Why? Because it is only one single person? Somehow when it is translated into millions, the very same kind of murder committed a million times over, then is God brought into the picture to explain and account for it. And to judge God by it . . . Somehow with regard to the death of the Six Million European Jews, God has to be dragged in to explain what ought to be explained

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Major non-profit international development agency seeks EXPERIENCED managers to direct overseas-based multi-million dollar programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Will supervise international & local national staff, conduct liaison & negotiations with host country & international officials & report to U.S. based Regional Director. Require fluent French/English, prior Third World experience & minimum 3 years commitment. Competitive salary, benefits, plus allowances. Send resume & salary history to:

Arthur Stegmayer
Catholic Relief Services
1011 First Ave.
N.Y., N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

simply by the fact recurring again and again of the mistreatment of one portion of humanity by another portion of humanity . . .''

When asked to describe God, the largest group of survivors felt that He was everything that Jewish tradition had claimed—omnipotent, benevolent, undoubtedly omniscient, and loving as well—even though his ways must remain incomprehensible. This is the Jobian answer: God is great but beyond our mortal minds.

How many of us, members of a comparatively staid society, are so unshakable in our resolve?

If it is true, as Richard Rubenstein and Arthur A. Cohen (in his recent book *The Tremendum*) have written, that the relationship of the Jew to his God is the most crucial question *after* Auschwitz, then by right of its subject matter alone *The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors* is a work of vast importance. This is a book of profound questions and equally profound answers, a book that throws our complacence into sharp relief.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 418)

are available to him. Since through the years Merton occasionally sent me a journal to read ''to amuse you,'' as he liked to say, I can attest to their being rich and illuminating in personal insight.

Although James Baker mentions what he rightly calls Monica Furlong's ''occasional lapses into pop psychoanalysis,'' he takes seriously what she describes as Merton's ''amateur journey into neurosis in the 1950s.'' It was precisely during these years that Merton and I were in almost constant communication, due to my helping him in organizing and typing out the six series of ''Orientation Notes,'' conferences to the choir novices. We did one series a year, completing them in 1955. Though the rigid monastic regime undoubtedly told on his physical health, through all our correspondence there is no indication of what one might designate as neurosis. On the contrary, these notes, covering some seven hundred pages of manuscript, witness to a mammoth task of reading and research no neurotic could ever have accomplished. And he kept his marvelous sense of humor. If his creative work suffered during these years it was not because he was nursing a neurosis. In a word, my opinion coincides with that of a ''prominent Louisville psychiatrist'' cited by Dr. Raymond Bailey in his *The Mysticism of Thomas Merton,* namely, that ''Merton was the healthiest and most normal man he had ever known.''

As to my having been a ''pen-pal'' of Merton's, albeit a ''poetic'' one, I have never so considered myself. It was Merton himself who in 1939 initiated our correspondence over a poem of mine he had read and liked. There followed a few brief exchanges. But when I found his review of my Marian anthology, *I Sing of a Maiden* in *Commonweal* (Feb. 20, 1948), though the review was entirely favorable, I was irked by his closing remark that for poets writing on the Mary-theme, it too often served as ''only a hook on which to hang their own portrait, or worse still, their own case history.'' I decided to write him and did, gently chiding him for his remark. He replied at once, saying, ''I felt rather cheap after making those statements, reflecting on all Catholic poets *en masse,* I wouldn't have said what I did if I did not believe it — but wish I had avoided the subject.'' This began a friendship which continued until his death.

As to the question why in my study of Merton's poetry, *Words and Silence,* as a ''soul sister'' I had not revealed ''more intimate glimpses of Merton's inner vision and its motivation,'' let a line of Abbot Flavian's address to his monks after Merton's death give something of an answer. ''The world knew him from his books,'' the Abbot said; ''we knew him from his spoken word. Few if any knew him in his secret prayer . . . this is what gave the inner life to all he said and wrote.'' In all friendships there are reticences. Were one allowed to cross the threshold of his ''house of the spirit,'' and share some knowledge of this ''inner prayer,'' the reticences are inviolable.

SISTER THERESE LENTFOEHR

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

Classified

RATES: 70¢ a word, one time; 66¢, three times; 63¢, six times; Classified payable with order; monthly in advance for more than three times. COMMONWEAL, 232 Madison Ave., NYC 10016.

Gonzaga University

Desire Priesthood? Sisterhood? Over 30? Write/phone collect (509) 328-4220. Father Nigro, Gonzaga University, Spokane 99258.

In Solitary Witness

In Solitary Witness by Gordon Zahn — The true, unexpurgated story of Franz Jägerstätter, who refused to serve in what he believed was an unjust war and was beheaded by Hitler. Softbound, 282 pages — $5.95+ $1.00 postage and handling. THE LITURGICAL PRESS, Box 8, Collegeville, MN 56321.

Kirkridge Gathering

The Company at Kirkridge, a supportive network for contemporary Christians will meet August 7,8,9, 1981 at Penn State University. Prof. Rustum Roy, scientist and Christian activist will present, "Enriching your Faith with Modern Scientific Insights." The cost is $25 for members; $30 for others. To register or for more information write Kathy Mourant 718 Glenn Rd., State College, PA 16801.

Doctors on the Bomb

"The Last Epidemic—Medical Consequences of Nuclear War," a video film, is available for group showing on UHS or Beta Max ½ inch tape. "Any nuclear war is totally contra-indicated for the survival of the gene pool." Backed by the AMA. Cost $40. Order from *Physicians for Social Responsibility*, P.O. Box 144, Watertown, Mass. 02172.

Public Broadcasting Special

Tax-deductible contributions needed to complete matching funds for a one-hour PBS special on Nuclear Disarmament, on TV later this year. Potential audience three to five million. Individuals and churches are asked to help sponsor this program. Checks should be sent to: *Public Interest Video Network*, P.O. 19112, 20th St. Station, Washington, DC 20036.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Did You Miss . . .

- J. Bryan Hehir: *Hard Choices in South Africa*
- E. J. Dionne: *Mr. Mitterrand and Mr. Reagan*
- The Editors: *After the Israeli Strike*
- Abigail McCarthy: *The Other Side of Islam*
- Thomas Sheehan: *The Pope, Italy, and Abortion*
- Jean Bethke Elshtain: *A Feminist's Journey*
- George H. Dunne: *An Account of Faith*
- Nancy Amidei: *The Attack on Food Stamps*
- David J. Bowman: *What to Think about Northern Ireland*
- Fred Siegel: *Notes on the New Right*
- Richard W. Franke & Barbara H. Chasin: *Africa's Other Famine*
- Thomas Powers: *The Iron Law of Institutions*

. . . in recent issues of COMMONWEAL?

SEND COUPON OR A FACSIMILE

11 issues (six months) for $8

7/31/81

FOR NEW SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

COMMONWEAL, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N. Y. 10016

Please send the next eleven issues of COMMONWEAL to:

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

☐ I prefer a full year's subscription at $22

412

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED